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## Charleston, South Carolina, United States, North America

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### OVERVIEW

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#### Introduction

Astronomers are pretty sure that Charleston is not the center of the universe, but the city's residents would like a second opinion. Fierce local pride is a Charleston institution, and it has helped sustain the city for more than 300 tumultuous years—from colonial times, through the Revolutionary and Civil wars, to the present.

Pride has also sustained thousands of historic buildings—a big reason that travelers visit today. A stroll down East Bay Street (known as Rainbow Row) to admire the pastel houses bedecked with their breezy piazzas will give you an idea of where the pride comes from. Spend some time lolling in the near-tropical warmth of the state's coastline, admiring the stoic architecture of the Citadel (the state's military college), or relaxing on the area beaches, and you'll likely find this a very pleasing corner of the cosmos.

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#### History

In 1670, a group of English colonists traveled up the Ashley River and settled Charles Towne, named in honor of King Charles II of England. Two years later, the colony relocated across the river to a more desirable site—the peninsula. By 1690, the city had become the fifth-largest in North America—a market town with busy wharves and a harbor full of sailing ships. But it was the area's tremendously successful rice-cultivation industry that made it rich. The Low Country rice plantations proved so profitable that their owners filled the city with elegant mansions.

At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War in 1776, Col. William Moultrie's fort on Sullivan's Island held against the firing of British forces, giving the new nation one of its first victories. After the war, Charles Towne became the city of Charleston, and its native sons played a key role in the formation of the new national government.

The city prospered and grew tremendously in the antebellum period. But tensions over states' rights and slavery led the state of South Carolina to secede from the U.S. in December 1860. Charlestonians cheered from the rooftops as the first shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. Though the Confederates won that battle, the siege nearly destroyed Charleston. The war devastated the plantation economy, forever changing the city's way of life. By the early 1900s, phosphate mining and a navy yard were bringing jobs and new residents to Charleston.

The city's wealth of architectural gems survives in no small part because of local citizens who, during the 1920s and '30s, formed the country's first historic district with regulatory control, thus preserving the structures. In the 1970s, the abundance of historic buildings and rich legacy were finally tapped by the Charleston Chamber of Commerce. Travelers still visit Charleston for its architecture, southern charm and appealing seaside climate.

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#### Geography

Charleston is on a peninsula bound by two rivers, the Ashley and the Cooper, which provide a natural, watery barrier that has pushed growth and development toward the north. For instance, King Street, the city's main shopping strip, is now bustling not only on its lower end (long famous for high-quality antiques) but also on its upper end (known for home furnishings and cafes that appeal to the younger set).

The city's original settlers laid out the streets in a checkerboard plan—King Street crosses Broad Street, which remains the premier address of old Charleston law and real estate firms. The corner of Broad and Meeting is aptly called the "Four Corners of Law" because of the four types of law represented on each corner: the U.S. Post Office (U.S. law), City Hall (municipal law), South Carolina State Courthouse (state law) and St. Michael's church (God's law). South of Broad (nicknamed SOB), the residential neighborhood encircled by the harbor, is still the most expensive spot to call home (a few bed-and-breakfasts allow you to do this, if even for a short time). You'll probably hear locals refer to the

area around and in between North and South Market streets as "the Market," a popular spot that includes many eateries, touristy shops and the historic covered market, where vendors sell various goods.

Areas such as East Cooper and West Ashley carry the implicit phrase "of the" (as in East "of the" Cooper), which explains their location with respect to the city's two rivers and provides visitors with a useful trick to get their bearings.

Various islands dot Charleston's harbor and coast, such as Sullivan's Island, James Island and Daniel Island, some of which have historic sites, beaches or other attractions.

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## Must See or Do

**Sights**—The woodwork at Drayton Hall; the stable yards at the Aiken-Rhett House; the Provost Dungeon in the Old Exchange building.

**Museums**—Sterling silver and sweetgrass baskets at the Charleston Museum; the miniature collection and gift shop at the Gibbes Museum of Art; the floating, circular staircase at the Nathaniel Russell House.

**Memorable Meals**—Frogmore stew at The Crab Shack; lunch specials at Gaulart and Malicet Cafe; Sunday brunch on the shaded terrace at Hominy Grill.

**Late Night**—The dueling piano show at Pluto Rocks; martinis from the outdoor bar at Trio Club; live music and artsy decor at Sermet's Corner; a midnight snack at Rue de Jean.

**Walks**—A stroll along Rainbow Row, the line of colorful houses on East Bay Street; a promenade through the gardens at Middleton Place; a walk along the water's edge at Folly Beach.

**Especially For Kids**—Native marine life displays at the South Carolina Aquarium; the interactive fountains and swings at Waterfront Park; swamp life at the Magnolia Plantation; the "scavenger hunt" walking tour map available at the Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon; exhibits at the Children's Museum of the Lowcountry.

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## SEE AND DO

### Sightseeing

In 1931, Charleston became the first city in the U.S. to establish a historic district to preserve its architectural heritage. It was obviously a good place to start: Of the 2,000 or so buildings in the district, 73 predate the Revolutionary War and 736 were constructed in the late 1700s and early 1800s.

For a quick introduction to the city's historic sites, stop at the visitors center on the north side of the Historic District for brochures and information. If you have a car, consider leaving it at the visitors center parking lot and taking a DASH (Downtown Area Shuttle) to the sights. Parking within the district is difficult.

We think a guided walking tour (either with a group or by using a pamphlet) is an excellent way to become familiar with the city. One dominant piece of architecture to look for is the single house—a tall, narrow structure that's just one-room wide. Built in various architectural styles, single houses generally have piazzas attached to one side.

Several of the major historic houses function as museums and are open to the public. The Calhoun Mansion has a particularly impressive ballroom with a skylight. Look for the magnificent woodwork in the Heyward-Washington House. You should also plan to take a walk along Rainbow Row—a collection of colorful houses on East Bay Street that show how Charleston's architectural style is adapted from that of the West Indies.

Churches offer more examples of historic architecture—city architectural codes decree that buildings in the Historic District may not rise above the steeples. We also recommend taking the boat tour to Fort Sumter National Monument.

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### Landmarks and Historic Sites

#### Calhoun Mansion

Completed in 1876, this 24,000-sq-ft/2,700-sq-m landmark is Charleston's largest single-family structure. It's an architectural blend of Victorian, Italian Renaissance and Caribbean colonial styles. The opulent interior boasts domed ceilings, a sweeping staircase, walnut woodwork and gas chandeliers. Wednesday-Sunday 10 am-4 pm. US\$15 adults, US\$7 children ages 5-10, free for children younger than 5. 16 Meeting St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-8205.

#### The Citadel

Military-history buffs will enjoy a visit to the historic Citadel Military Academy. The public is welcome to attend dress

parades on Friday at 3:45 pm during the academic year. You can also visit the Citadel Museum, which is open afternoons during the school year. Museum open Sunday-Friday 2-5 pm, Saturday noon-5 pm. Museum US\$7. 171 Moultrie St. (on the Ashley River near Hampton Park), Charleston. Phone 843-225-3294. <http://www.citadel.edu>.

### College of Charleston

Many shady trees, brick walkways and historic Charleston houses form the graceful campus of this college, founded in 1770 and centered on the corner of George and St. Phillip streets. The Avery Research Center for African-American History and Culture is also part of the campus on the restored site of Avery School. It traces the heritage of Low Country African Americans through exhibits that include a restored 19th-century classroom. The Avery Research Center is open Monday-Saturday noon-5 pm and mornings by appointment. Free. 66 George St., Charleston. Phone 843-805-5507. <http://www.cofc.edu>.

### Drayton Hall

A large brick structure built in 1738, this plantation house is considered one of the finest examples of Georgian-Palladian architecture in the U.S. It was one of the few plantation homes along the Ashley River that wasn't vandalized by Union troops during the Civil War. Today, it remains in its original condition: It has never been wired for electricity or equipped with running water. You can still see original layers of paint and intricate woodwork throughout the house. March-October daily 9:30 am-4 pm, November-February daily 9:30 am-3 pm. US\$12. 3380 Ashley River Road (about 9 mi/14 km northwest of the Historic District), Charleston. Phone 843-769-2600. <http://www.draytonhall.org>.

### Fort Sumter National Monument

In April 1861, the forces of the Confederate States of America fired on the Federal troops stationed on the island fort, marking the start of the Civil War. The soldiers within the fort surrendered to the Confederates after more than a day of shelling, although no one was killed in the attack. Today, National Park Service rangers conduct free tours of the structure, which also houses a museum. The tours last two and a half hours and usually depart at 9:30 am, noon and 2:30 pm. To get there, take a boat from Liberty Square, the ferry facility next to the South Carolina Aquarium. The monument is open daily 9 am-5 pm. US\$12 adults, free for children younger than 6 (includes boat trip and monument admission). 1214 Middle St., Sullivans Island. Phone 843-883-3123. <http://www.nps.gov/foosu>.

### The H.L. Hunley

Conservation work continues on the *H.L. Hunley* at the Warren Lasch Conservation Center, located at the Old Navy Base. The Civil War submarine was recovered in 1995 from waters off the Charleston coast. One of the first submarines built, the *Hunley* sunk a Union ship and then disappeared. Tours are available Saturday 10 am-5 pm and Sunday noon-5 pm. US\$10 plus service charge (advance purchase recommended; walk-up tickets are limited). Warren Lasch Conservation Center, Old Navy Base (take Interstate 26 to Cosgrove Avenue North, and follow signs), Charleston. Phone 843-744-2186. To purchase tickets, call 877-448-6539. <http://www.hunley.org>.

### Heyward-Washington House

The "Washington" in the name refers to U.S. President George Washington, who stayed at the home during a tour of the 13 colonies in 1791. The first part of the name refers to Daniel Heyward, the wealthy planter who built the house in the late 1700s. (His son, Thomas, was a member of the first Continental Congress and a signer of the Declaration of Independence.) Although the multistory brick structure is impressive, it's the period furniture that really draws your attention: Much of it was constructed by English-trained artisans replicating Chippendale designs. The Holmes Bookcase, a five-sectioned piece of magnificent craftsmanship, is considered among the finest American pieces of the period. Guided tours Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 1-5 pm. Museum US\$9 adults. Historic House US\$8 adults. 87 Church St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-2996. <http://www.charlestonmuseum.org/heyward.asp>.

### Magnolia Cemetery

Dedicated in 1850, this cemetery is the final resting place of many of the town's illustrious citizens and contains a section dedicated to Confederate soldiers killed in the Civil War. Daily 2-6 pm. Free. 70 Cunningham St. (about 3 mi/5 km from the Historic District), Charleston. Phone 843-722-8638.

### Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon

During the Revolutionary War, the British held American patriots in the Old Exchange building. In 1965, an excavation of the dungeon revealed a portion of Charles Towne's original seawall. Today, the exhibits focus on military history. Daily 9 am-5 pm. US\$7 adults, US\$3.50 children ages 7-12. 122 E. Bay St., Charleston. Phone 843-727-2165. <http://www.oldexchange.com>.

### Old Powder Magazine

Built in 1713, this is the oldest public building in Charleston. It once stored munitions for the city's defense against Spanish vessels based in St. Augustine. The restored building has exhibits about early Charleston and offers an audiovisual tour. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 2-5 pm. Free. 79 Cumberland St., Charleston. Phone 843-805-6730.

### Rainbow Row

This strip of 14 tightly packed, colonial-era houses, each a different pastel hue, was built between 1740 and 1790, many in the Federal brick style. The area where they stand once constituted the Charleston waterfront district. 83-107

E. Bay St., Charleston.

### **St. Michael's Episcopal Church**

The sounds of St. Michael's bells are beloved in Charleston—they can be heard throughout the day. Completed in 1761 (with the bells imported from England and added in 1764), this church was modeled after London's St. Martin-in-the-Fields and is Charleston's oldest surviving house of worship. Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday 9 am-noon. Free. 14 St. Michael's Alley, Charleston. Phone 843-723-0603. <http://www.stmichaelschurch.net>.

### **St. Philip's Episcopal Church and Cemetery**

Once known as the lighthouse church because a light placed in its steeple helped guide ships to port, St. Philip's was constructed 1835-38. Charlestonians are buried in the graveyard next to the church. Non-Charlestonians, including John C. Calhoun, are buried on the opposite side of the street. The interior can be visited by appointment only. Free. 146 Church St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-7734.

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## **Museums**

### **Aiken-Rhett House**

Built in 1817, this historic house is considered to be one of the most complete documents of antebellum life in the South. The stable yards offer a rare glimpse into 19th-century urban life for African Americans. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 2-5 pm. US\$6 (US\$10 combination ticket with entrance to the Nathaniel Russell House). 48 Elizabeth St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-1623. <http://www.historiccharleston.org/aiken.html>.

### **The Charleston Museum**

This museum explores the cultural and natural history of the Low Country from prehistoric times to the present. The museum's collection of more than 500,000 items includes Charleston silver, toys, snuff boxes and more. Don't miss the South Carolina decorative-arts collection. The Discover Me room for children has lots of hands-on exhibits. Monday-Saturday 9 am-5 pm, Sunday 1-5 pm. US\$10 adults, US\$4 children ages 3-12. 360 Meeting St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-2996. <http://www.charlestonmuseum.org>.

### **Children's Museum of the Lowcountry**

Hands-on exhibits, including a climb-aboard shrimp boat, golf ball race and two-story medieval castle, are targeted to children ages 3 months to 12 years. Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 1-5 pm. US\$5, free for children younger than 1. 25 Anne St., Charleston. Phone 843-853-8962. <http://www.exploreclm.org>.

### **Gibbes Museum of Art**

The Gibbes has a notable collection of American and European paintings depicting past and present Charleston. It also features more than 400 miniature portraits, miniature rooms and special traveling exhibits. Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 1-5 pm. US\$7 adults, US\$3 children. 135 Meeting St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-2706. <http://www.gibbesmuseum.org>.

### **Joseph Manigault House**

This house museum is an outstanding example of Adam-style architecture, which is closely related to American Federal-style architecture. Built in 1803, the house also has an impressive collection of American and English furniture. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 1-5 pm. US\$7 (ask about combination tickets to the Charleston Museum, which owns the house). 350 Meeting St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-2996. <http://www.charlestonmuseum.org/manigault.asp>.

### **Nathaniel Russell House**

Wealthy shipping merchant Nathaniel Russell built this mansion so that he could look out over the city's bustling wharves. Completed in 1808 (at a cost of about US\$80,000), the house is designed in the American Federal style. Its most prominent feature is a three-story staircase that seems to float without any means of architectural support. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 2-5 pm. US\$8 (US\$12 combination ticket with entrance to the Aiken-Rhett House). 51 Meeting St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-1623. <http://www.historiccharleston.org>.

### **Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum**

At this museum across the Cooper River in Mount Pleasant, you can see the aircraft carrier *Yorktown*, a nuclear-powered merchant ship, a World War II submarine, a destroyer and a Coast Guard cutter. Daily 9 am-5 pm. US\$13 adults. 40 Patriots Point Road (about 4 mi/6 km from the Historic District), Mount Pleasant. Phone 843-884-2727. <http://www.patriotspoint.org>.

### **Thomas Elfe House**

This pre-Revolutionary War single house was built by Thomas Elfe, one of Charleston's renowned furniture makers. Still a private home, it has fine, rare woodwork including cabinetry and cornice moldings. Monday-Friday 10 am-noon or by appointment. US\$5. 54 Queen St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-9161.

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## **Parks and Gardens**

### **Charles Towne Landing State Park**

This is the site of the first permanent settlement in South Carolina in 1670. The animal forest, where you can see critters such as otters, bears and alligators, and the Adventure, a reproduction of a 17th-century trading vessel, are worth the visit. Also notable is a public archaeology site, where you can view recently unearthed artifacts and even participate in a dig. You can also rent bikes at the 663-acre/268-hectare park. June-August daily 8:30 am-6 pm, September-May daily 8:30 am-5 pm. US\$5 adults, US\$2.50 children ages 6-11, free for children younger than 5. 1500 Old Towne Road, Charleston. Phone 843-852-4200. <http://www.southcarolinaparks.com>.

### **Magnolia Plantation**

The highlights of this plantation are the more than 300-year-old gardens. You'll find a riot of colorful flora, an herb garden, a horticultural labyrinth and a topiary garden. The attached Audubon Swamp Garden is a cypress and tupelo swamp with an appropriately southern-Gothic air. Bridges, dikes and boardwalks traverse the swamp so that visitors can make eye contact with the inhabitants. Also on the plantation grounds are the Barbados Tropical Garden and a waterfowl refuge that can be reached by canoe or bicycle. Magnolia Plantation is a favorite with children, who can pet animals, chase chickens or ride rental bikes around the rice pond. Daily 8 am-dusk (ticket sales end at 5 or 5:30 pm). US\$13 (additional US\$7 for house tour, US\$7 for nature train tour, US\$5 for self-guided swamp tour). 3550 Ashley River Road (about 12 mi/19 km northwest of downtown on Highway 61), Charleston. Phone 843-571-1266. <http://www.magnoliaplantation.com>.

### **Middleton Place**

We're especially enamored of this estate's English-style garden from the 1740s. The camellias are believed to be some of America's oldest, and the butterfly-shaped pond is a gorgeous setting for a picnic. Demonstrations of typical plantation tasks are featured, chickens and goats wander about the stable yard, and a restaurant serves Low Country fare. Daily 9 am-5 pm. US\$20 (an additional US\$10 for a tour of the estate). 4300 Ashley River Road (about 14 mi/23 km northwest of downtown), Charleston. Phone 843-556-6020. Toll-free 800-782-3608. <http://www.middletonplace.org>.

### **Waterfront Park**

Children love the interactive fountains, swings, picnic tables and fishing pier at this park overlooking Charleston Harbor. After a day of touring, treat yourself to an Italian ice sold by street vendors. Daily 6 am-midnight. Free. Concord Street and Vendue Range, Charleston.

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## **Zoos and Wildlife**

### **South Carolina Aquarium**

The aquarium, which opened in 2000, takes you through more than 60 exhibits about South Carolina's aquatic habitats, including a huge ocean tank with one of the tallest aquarium windows in North America. April-15 August Monday-Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm; 16 August-March Monday-Saturday 9 am-5 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm. US\$15 adults, US\$8 children ages 3-11, free for children younger than 3. 350 Concord St., Charleston. Phone 843-720-1990. <http://www.scaquarium.org>.

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## **Recreation**

Charleston's temperate climate makes recreation and outdoor activities particularly popular with residents and visitors alike. Whether you're looking to spend a day at the beach, in one of the pristine national forests or on a rolling fairway, the city offers plenty of recreation options.

### **Beaches**

You'll have to get out of town a bit to find a beach, but there are several to choose from. Most are located on the coastal islands that surround Charleston harbor and run southwest of town. Folly Beach—just 10 minutes south of Charleston—is the closest. It's a good location for fishing, swimming, waterskiing and sailing, although our favorite activity there is crabbing.

Isle of Palms lies to the east of the city and has 17 mi/27 km of beach including a public beach park, a major resort and a beachfront cluster of shops and restaurants. Nearby Sullivan's Island also has a public-access beach.

Farther to the southwest, Kiawah Island has public beach access at Beachwalker Park. The rest of the island is made up of private residences and resorts.

Edisto Beach (on the island of the same name) is 45 mi/72 km southwest of Charleston. This area is serene and beautiful, in part because of Edisto Beach State Park, but it is becoming more developed.

Private resorts and villas along the coast offer more beaches, though those areas are generally not open to the public. Seabrook Island, for instance, is all privately owned, and a gated entry prevents nonowners and nonguests from being admitted.

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## Boating and Sailing

### Captain Jack's Sailing Charters

This charter company offers sailboat, motorboat and kayak tours and rentals in addition to adventure cruises and tackle rental. Daily 8 am-8 pm. US\$15-\$230 depending on services. 1880 Andell Bluff Blvd. (Bohicket Marina), Johns Island. Phone 843-343-1772.

### Coastal Expeditions

This outfitter provides half-day, full-day and overnight kayak tours, rentals and instruction for exploring local coastal islands, swamps, marsh creeks and beaches. A naturalist also leads a ferry-boat excursion to Bulls Island, which is part of the Cape Romain National Wildlife Preserve. Daily 9 am-6 pm mid February-December; January-mid February by appointment only. US\$20-\$140. 514-B Mill St. (Shem Creek Maritime Center), Mount Pleasant. Phone 843-884-7684. <http://www.coastalexpeditions.com/welcome.htm>.

### Sandlapper Water Tours

Explore local waterways on a history, nature or sunset cruise aboard a 45-ft/14-m, 50-person catamaran. The nature tour includes trolling for touch-tank goodies and a stop along an uninhabited island. All tours depart from the Maritime Center. History tour daily April-October 11 am-12:30 pm; nature tour Tuesday-Saturday 2-4 pm; sunset cruise daily 7-9 pm. November-March groups and private charters only. Reservations recommended. US\$15-\$20. Phone 843-849-8687. <http://www.sandlappertours.com>.

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## Golf

Golf has long been a popular pursuit in the Charleston area. In fact, the city claims to be the site of the nation's first golf course, which was established in 1786. Today, there are top-notch courses in the area, designed by some of the biggest names in golf (Robert Trent Jones Sr., Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player and Rees Jones). Many of the courses are part of private resorts that specialize in golf vacations, so they may not be open to the public. To learn more about golf packages or to book tee times, call Charleston Golf Inc. toll-free at 800-774-4444 or visit <http://www.charlestongolfguide.com>.

### Charleston Municipal Golf Course

Not far from downtown, this 18-hole course meanders through Low Country marshland and offers a driving range, putting green, pro shop, lessons, summer clinics and a restaurant. Players love to walk this course. Daily dawn-dusk. Greens fees: US\$14 weekdays for nine holes, US\$16 weekends. 2110 Maybank Highway, Charleston. Phone 843-795-6517.

### Ocean Course at Kiawah Island Resort

The site of the 2003 World Cup and 1991 Ryder Cup, Kiawah Island's Ocean Course, designed by Pete Dye, is an 18-hole, par-72 course with amazing sea views. The resort also features five other championship courses. Daily dawn-dusk. Greens fee: US\$149 for nine holes. 1000 Ocean Course Drive, Kiawah Island. Phone 843-768-2121. <http://www.kiawahgolf.com>.

### Patriots Point Links

This Mount Pleasant facility has an 18-hole course that runs along the harbor, a driving range, putting green and a pro shop that offers lessons. Close to downtown and convenient to the islands. Daily 8 am-dusk. Greens fees: US\$40 for nine holes weekdays, US\$43 weekends. 100 Patriots Point Road, Mount Pleasant. Phone 843-881-0042.

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## Hiking and Walking

Locals love to jog, walk or just relax around Colonial Lake (between Ashley and Rutledge avenues), a small man-made lake circled by a sidewalk, trees and benches, and surrounded by pretty Victorian buildings. Another popular place to jog or walk is through The Battery and White Point Gardens to Waterfront Park.

### Frances Marion National Forest

At this 250,000-acre/101,170-hectare national forest (a 30-minute drive from downtown), visitors can hike numerous trails, bike the 26-mi/40-km Swamp Fox Trail (which winds along old railroad trams and through swampland), ride horses, camp, fish, picnic and shoot skeet at the rifle range. The park even has motorcycle trails. Open dawn-dusk. Prices vary. Highway 17 North, McClellanville. Phone 843-336-3248 or 843-887-3257.

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## Other Options

### Edisto River Canoe and Kayak Trail

Part of this trail is reputed to be the world's longest free-flowing black-water stream, and it traverses 66 mi/106 km of the Edisto River. Daily dawn-dusk. Free. Group tours can be arranged. Phone 843-549-9595 for information. Phone 843-549-5591 for tours.

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## DayTrips

To **Beaufort**. About an hour south of the city, Beaufort is a small, quiet town seeped in history. Beaufort's 18th- and 19th-century houses—many large and lavish—are reminders of prosperous past ties to Sea Island cotton plantations. The charming houses and churches have been preserved, and many of the houses serve as bed-and-breakfasts. You can take a self-guided walking tour or a carriage tour.

There are quaint shops and art galleries on Bay Street, as well as the restored John Mark Verdier House Museum. Built about 1790, the museum is furnished as it would have been in the early 1800s. (It was the headquarters for Union forces during the Civil War.) Waterfront Park is a landscaped area along the Beaufort River with a seawall promenade, crafts market and marina. Parris Island, about 10 mi/16 km south of Beaufort, is also worth a visit: About 17,000 U.S. Marine Corps recruits pass through there each year. St. Helena Island, a few miles/kilometers down Highway 21, is still mostly rural and dotted with historic sites, including the Penn Center, established in the middle of the Civil War as the South's first school for freed slaves. Nearby, Hunting Island State Park has a quiet beach, nature trails, a 1,120-ft/340-m fishing pier and lighthouse. From Charleston, head south on Highway 17 and continue on Highway 521.

To **Myrtle Beach**. A two-hour drive from Charleston, Myrtle Beach is often called the best family beach in the Grand Strand. This exciting and never-ending place offers 60 mi/95 km of white-sand beaches along the Atlantic Coast. Golfers have more than 100 golf courses to choose from. Children enjoy miniature golf, an aquarium and a Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum. Shoppers will love the outlet stores, specialty shops, flea markets and three large shopping malls. There are also amusement and water parks that the entire family will enjoy. Nightlife brings live music to the streets and boardwalk. From Charleston, head north on Highway 17 toward Georgetown.

To **Summerville**. Located in Dorchester County (about 45 minutes from Charleston traveling north on Highway 61), Summerville was founded in 1785, when many plantation owners fled to this pineland village to escape the swamp fevers and insects. After the turn of the 20th century, Summerville became a winter resort for northern visitors, including Theodore Roosevelt. The town's historic district, which includes 200 buildings, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its old-fashioned Main Street has an old-style hardware store, some nice cafes and restaurants, and a drugstore with a soda fountain.

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## Local Tours

Many reputable companies offer tours of Charleston's Historic District and nearby landmarks. Tours include history walks led by licensed guides, narrated bus tours and leisurely carriage rides.

### Grayline Bus Tour

Take one of these coach buses for a general narrated tour of the city. You can also add on a tour of the Joseph Manigault House, Fort Sumter or Charleston Harbor. The tour begins at the visitors center downtown. Daily 9:30 am-3:30 pm. US\$16-\$25 adults, US\$11-\$16 children younger than 12. Phone 843-722-4444.

### Gullah Tours

Explore the places, history and stories relevant to Charleston's Gullah and African-American communities. The bus tour, which lasts about two hours and begins at the African-American Art Gallery on John Street, includes a visit to the workshop of famous blacksmith Philip Simmons. US\$18 adults, US\$15 teens, US\$12 for children younger than 12. 9 Trachelle Lane, Charleston. Phone 843-763-7551.

### Palmetto Carriage Tours

Horse-drawn carriage tours provide the perfect pace for admiring the city's detailed architecture. The one-hour tour covers 25-30 blocks of one of four zones in the Historic District. It begins at the red barn downtown just off Market Street. Daily 10 am-dusk. US\$17 adults, US\$6 for children younger than 11. Phone 843-723-8145.

### Talk of the Towne Tours

Personally narrated by a tour guide, these 20-passenger minibus tours cover 6 mi/10 km that include The Battery, the Market, College of Charleston and more. You can opt for a tour that includes a stop at one of two historic houses, too. All tours leave from the Visitor Reception and Transportation Center at 375 Meeting St. Daily 9:15 and 11:45 am and 3 pm. US\$15-\$25, US\$10-\$16 for children younger than 12. Toll-free 888-795-8199. <http://www.talkofthetowne.com>.

### Tour Charleston

This company offers two different ghost tours, as well as a Charleston history tour. One ghost tour visits spooky sites within the Historic District. It begins at Waterfront Park. Another (which begins at Marion Square) takes you to the site of eerie happenings on the campuses of the old Citadel and the College of Charleston. Tours daily at 10 am and 4, 5, 6, 7:30, 9 and 9:30 pm. US\$15 adults, US\$10 children younger than 13. 184 E. Bay St., Charleston. Toll-free 800-854-1670. <http://www.tourcharleston.com>.

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## Itineraries

### Day by Day

**Day 1**—Begin at the Charleston Visitor Center on the north side of the Historic District. Spend the morning touring the area, either on foot or by horse-drawn carriage. Visit one or two house museums for an up-close look, and then stroll along one of the city's streets to admire the architecture. View the houses with historical plaques that detail each home's history. The market area has vendor stalls with lots of knickknacks, and the "grass ladies" who weave their famous baskets are on nearly every corner. After lunch, take the harbor boat tour to Fort Sumter. Dine downtown, where there's everything from traditional Low Country and nouveau southern to Thai food. Afterward attend a ballet, opera or symphony performance.

**Day 2**—Cross over the Ashley River Bridge and visit Charles Towne Landing in the morning. Afterward, follow Highway 61 northwest to Magnolia Plantation, Drayton Hall or Middleton Place. For lunch, try some of the traditional Charleston favorites, such as ham biscuits, hopping John or she-crab soup at Middleton's Restaurant. Return to Charleston in the late afternoon. Toast the day with sunset drinks at one of Charleston's rooftop bars, and then try a favorite local pastime—appetizer-hopping from one acclaimed restaurant to the next. Many are within walking distance.

**Day 3**—If you're in the mood for more history, see the Charleston Museum in the morning before taking the rest of the day for the leisure activity of your choice: shopping (check out King Street, where mighty chain stores such as Williams-Sonoma and Bebe shoulder in next to local shops such as Croghans and Elizabeth Stuart Designs), fishing, golfing or relaxing on the beach. If you're a surfer, your best bet is Folly Beach. Beer and volleyball fans should head to the Windjammer on the Isle of Palms.

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## DINING

Though Charleston is a city of tradition, the custom of dining out is rather new: The majority of the fine restaurants in the city have opened in the past 25 years or so. In that time, however, Charleston has become well-known for its food, with new eateries opening regularly both in and outside of the downtown historic area.

The emphasis is often on Low Country recipes, sometimes given a contemporary slant. And as might be expected of a seaside city, Charleston is a great place for seafood. Shrimp, oysters and crab turn up in a variety of recipes, including the local favorite, she-crab soup (cream-based and laced with sherry). You should also try Carolina red rice. Look for Beaufort or Frogmore stew (named for the towns just down the coast), a combination of sausage, corn and shrimp. Shrimp and grits (with a gravy or sauce) and hopping John (an African-inspired mixture of rice and field peas) also should not be missed.

General dining times are 7-10 am for breakfast, 11:30 am-2:30 pm for lunch and 7-9 pm for dinner. If you're trying to get into a popular restaurant, you may want to avoid these hours.

Here is a sampling of restaurants in town. Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of a dinner for one, not including drinks, tax or tip: \$ = US\$10-\$20; \$\$ = US\$21-\$30; \$\$\$ = US\$31-\$40; and \$\$\$\$ = more than US\$40.

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## Favorites

### Coast Bar and Grill

Located in a former locomotive roundhouse in the Upper King Street area, this seafood restaurant uses sophisticated lighting, booths, an open kitchen, outdoor seating and a roomy bar with community table to create a casual and upscale atmosphere. Signature dishes include the crab-stuffed flounder, crispy fried lobster tails and wood-grilled fish. Live music Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday evenings. Open nightly for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 39-B John St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-8838.

### The Crab Shack

This family favorite is located in West Ashley, near Folly Beach. Enjoy a friendly, fun and casual Jimmy Buffet-style atmosphere. The menu includes Frogmore stew, crab dinners, fried green tomatoes and buckets of oysters. Open daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 205 E. Bay St., Charleston. Phone 843-853-8600.

### Gaulart and Maliclet Cafe

This casual, chic eatery serves Continental dishes—breads and pastries, soups, salads, sandwiches—and specials such as seafood Normandy and chicken sesame. Diners sit on high stools at a barlike counter that runs the length of a skinny historic space with great woodwork and high ceilings. In true French style, the cafe serves great coffee, desserts, cheese, wine and bread. Open Tuesday-Saturday for breakfast, lunch and dinner, Monday for breakfast and lunch only. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 98 Broad St., Charleston. Phone 843-577-9797.

### Il Cortile del Re

One of Charleston's crumbling brick walls forms a courtyard at this romantic spot. The Italian menu features great wines, hearty soups and pastas, and lovely cheeses and breads. Open Tuesday-Saturday for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 193 King St., Charleston. Phone 843-853-1888.

**McCradys**

Sublime seafood dishes are among the offerings at this quietly elegant space—a former tavern built in 1778. The cuisine is contemporary American with a French flair. One of the tucked-away leather booths in the bar area provides a particularly cozy spot. Open nightly for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 2 Unity Alley, Charleston. Phone 843-577-0025. <http://www.mccradysrestaurant.com>.

**Peninsula Grill**

The walls in this classy restaurant are lined in green velvet and decorated with 18th-century-style portraits. Dine in the courtyard or the elegant bar. The wild-mushroom grits with oysters is a local favorite, but leave room for the coconut layer cake. Open nightly for dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 112 N. Market St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-0700. <http://www.peninsulagrill.com>.

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## Local and Regional

**Carolina's**

One of Charleston's original upscale dining experiences, it remains a favorite thanks to its lively 1920s French bistro atmosphere and a friendly, upbeat bar area. Be sure to sample the shrimp and crab-cake wontons with ginger lime sauce, the pasta with crawfish and *tasso* (spiced ham) in cream sauce, the pork tenderloin with Jamaican seasoning and the brittle-basket ice cream. Open nightly for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 10 Exchange St., Charleston. Phone 843-724-3800.

**Charleston Grill**

This dark, clubby restaurant in the Charleston Place Hotel offers elegant dining, live jazz most nights and a classy bar. The spicy, fried oyster salad is great, as are the beef medallions, lobster tempura, duck foie gras and croissant bread pudding. Open nightly for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 224 King St. (in the Charleston Place Hotel), Charleston. Phone 843-577-4522.

**Circa 1886**

Locals choose this place for romantic, special-occasion dinners. Tucked away in a former carriage house behind the Wentworth Mansion hotel downtown, Circa 1886 boasts dramatic chandeliers, attentive service and a 280-bottle wine list. Try long-forgotten local dishes such as pine bark stew (a fish stew) and country captain (a curried chicken dish). Other menu highlights include sugar-cured tuna, lobster cappuccino, pan-roasted sea bass and champagne-poached tuna with avocado sorbet. Open Monday-Saturday for dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 149 Wentworth St., Charleston. Phone 843-853-7828.

**Hominy Grill**

Formerly a barber shop with a pressed-tin ceiling, this bright eatery has unpretentiously great food and free downtown parking. It's a neighborhood bistro where you can get chicken and dumplings, an almighty vegetable fix or sesame-crusted catfish with fried okra. Other good bets include the okra soup, mushroom hominy and buttermilk pie. Open Monday-Saturday for breakfast, lunch and dinner, Sunday for brunch only. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 207 Rutledge Ave., Charleston. Phone 843-937-0930.

**Jestine's Kitchen**

Locals flock to this casual downtown eatery to get their fix for cravings of old-fashioned Southern foods, such as fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, fried fish, meat loaf and sweet tea. Open Tuesday-Sunday for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 251 Meeting St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-7224.

**Magnolias**

A magnolia theme runs through this restaurant, which is housed in a former warehouse. Don't miss the down South egg roll stuffed with chicken and collard greens with spicy mustard sauce. Other highlights include the crab cakes, the Vidalia onion salad, and the fried chicken with mashed potatoes and mushroom gravy. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 185 E. Bay St., Charleston. Phone 843-577-7771.

**Slightly North of Broad**

Inventive dishes come out of this brick-and-stucco-walled restaurant. Visitors dining alone can sit at a long counter, which looks directly into the busy, open kitchen. Specials include quail filled with sausage, deviled crab cakes, a southern vegetable plate and a nicely priced wine list. Open Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday and Sunday for dinner only. \$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 192 E. Bay St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-3424.

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## Cuisines

**American  
Boulevard Diner**

This no-frills, well-lit family eatery in Mount Pleasant has great vegetable platters, meat loaf, fried chicken, fish

sandwiches, and fried eggplant, blue cheese and tomato sandwiches—even fried pickles. The friendly staff serves breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. \$. Most major credit cards. 409 W. Coleman Blvd., Mount Pleasant. Phone 843-216-2611.

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## Asian

### Basil

Located in the trendy Upper King area, this corner restaurant stays busy. Fans don't mind the wait and usually pass the time having a drink at a nearby bar. Highlights include the duck, three-spice fried fish and curry dishes. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 460 King St., Charleston. Phone 843-724-3490.

### Miyabi

An entertaining restaurant with table-side cooking, Miyabi serves sushi, hibachi steak and your choice of meats complemented by the homemade sauces. It has good early-bird specials and can easily accommodate large groups. Nightly for dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 688 Citadel Haven Drive, Charleston. Phone 843-571-6025.

### Pattaya Thai

In a strip mall in Mount Pleasant, this cheerful restaurant has typical Thai decor and seating at its long countertop. Fresh spring rolls, spicy basil leaves, marinated beef salad and Thai iced tea are some of the favorites. Daily for lunch and dinner, late-night menu till 1 am. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 607 Johnnie Dodds Blvd., Mount Pleasant. Phone 843-856-1808.

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## Continental

### J. Bistro

This chic spot in Mount Pleasant is dark and funky with low-key lighting and banquet-style tables. Lots of appetizers and small plates including steamed lobster wontons; grouper with champagne, crabmeat cream sauce; and pecan-crusted catfish over grits. The fillet also is a great deal. Open Tuesday-Sunday for dinner (and Sunday brunch). \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 819 Coleman Blvd., Mount Pleasant. Phone 843-971-7778.

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## French

### Robert's of Charleston

Robert is a classically trained singer and chef who creates four rich, generous courses with lovely wines, impeccable service and the best Broadway tunes in a warm, intimate dining room. Highlights from the menu include scallop mousse with lobster sauce, duckling with grilled vegetables, chateaubriand and chocolate cake. One seating daily at 7:30 pm. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$\$. Visa only. 182 E. Bay St., Charleston. Phone 843-577-7565.

### Rue de Jean

In the tradition of a French brasserie, this large, airy restaurant features a white-aproned staff that serves mussels five ways, traditional dishes including cassoulet and bouillabaisse, braised rabbit, and even sushi. Completing the Monetlike scene are an outdoor seating area, a busy bar where the trendy gather, mirrored wall hangings and tables covered in white paper. Daily for lunch and dinner, late-night menu till 1 am. \$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 39 John St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-8881.

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## Italian

### Andolini's

Booths, pitchers of beer, perfect crusts, lots of optional garlic and a fresh tomato base make this downtown pizzeria near the College of Charleston popular with students, families and couples. Solo diners can enjoy a slice at the bar. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. 82 Wentworth St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-7437. <http://www.andolinis.com>.

### Capriccio

This romantic Mount Pleasant eatery has the kind of ambience you'd expect to find in a little Italian spot: cozy booths, a bar strung with tiny lights, wood floors and candles on each table. Try the mussels, eggplant parmigiana and fine pasta. Open Tuesday-Saturday for dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 1034 Chuck Dawley Blvd., Mount Pleasant. Phone 843-881-5550.

### Fulton Five

There are only 15 tables in this romantic restaurant on a side road off King Street. Northern Italian specialties include risotto, antipasto Spoleto (grilled mozzarella and prosciutto in a romaine lettuce leaf) and lemon sherbet with Campari. Open Monday-Saturday for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 5 Fulton St., Charleston. Phone 843-853-5555.

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## Vegetarian

### Mustard Seed

This comfortable neighborhood spot has booths and lots of fresh food, including such vegetarian specialties as black bean cakes, hummus, soup and salads. Try the grilled portobello mushroom, angel hair pasta with asparagus or the coconut cake. The Mount Pleasant location was so popular, the owners opened another Mustard Seed on James Island, a few minutes from downtown. Open Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday for dinner only. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 1220 Ben Sayer Blvd., Mount Pleasant. Phone 843-856-1808.

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## Seafood

### Boathouse Restaurant

Large portions of fresh seafood at reasonable prices mean this spot requires reservations. Go for the fish specials and lightly battered fried shrimp and oysters, all of which come with mashed potatoes, grits, collard greens or blue-cheese coleslaw. We recommend the original, on-the-water location. Nightly for dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 101 Palm Blvd., Isle Of Palms. Phone 843-886-8000.

### Hank's Seafood Restaurant

Enjoy extraordinary meals in a renovated warehouse that reflects Charleston's history. This local favorite was re-created as a fish house, with an old-fashioned saloon atmosphere and exhibition raw bar. Favorites are Hank's she-crap soup and fried seafood platters. Open nightly for dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. the corner of Church and Hayne streets, Charleston. Phone 843-7233474.

### Seewee Restaurant

It's not right on the water, but the atmosphere of this place makes up for that. Built in the early 1920s, it used to be a general store. Today, it's known for its delicious seafood dishes and southern-style foods. Specialties are she-crab soup, fried shrimp and fried green tomatoes. Try the layer cakes, too. Open Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for brunch only. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 4804 N. Highway 17, Awendaw. Phone 843-928-3609.

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## Steak Houses

### High Cotton

This window-lined eatery is in the old warehouse district, and it features pine floors, original brick walls with mahogany paneling, plantation shades and cushy leather booths. High Cotton is a regional steak house that makes its own sauce, cured ham and sausages. The menu focuses on grilled meats, game and straightforward seafood, but save room for the roasted banana souffle with caramel sauce or the praline souffle with chocolate sauce. Daily for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 199 E. Bay St., Charleston. Phone 843-724-3815.

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## ENTERTAINMENT

### Nightlife

Charleston is home to several colleges and a growing population of young professionals, so on any given night there are several animated spots with live bands. You can find everything from laid-back dessert bars with acoustic guitar performances to rave nights at nightclubs and salsa spots. A unique local institution is the shagging joint, where locals shag—a dance style that goes best with beach music. Summer brings special events such as Martini Nights that rotate from bar to bar (check local posters); Alive After Five, a happy-hour gathering May-September on the waterfront at Charleston's Maritime Center; and Party at the Point, another waterfront gathering with live music April-October at the Hilton Charleston Harbor Resort. Because of a city mandate, downtown bars in the historic area must close at 2 am.

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### Bars, Taverns and Pubs

#### The Best Friend Lounge

This lounge in the historic Mills House Hotel is a mellow, romantic spot that features live music, usually by a guitarist. Wednesday-Saturday from 6 pm. No cover. 115 Meeting St., Charleston. Phone 843-577-2400. <http://www.millshouse.com>.

#### Blind Tiger Pub

A wonderful garden bar area makes this former speakeasy the place to be during the summer and mild-weathered months. There's a beautiful pressed-tin ceiling and beer on tap. Weekdays from 4 pm, weekends from 2 pm. No cover. 38 Broad St., Charleston. Phone 843-577-0088. <http://www.btpub.com>.

#### Charlie's Little Bar

Above Saracen Restaurant (you enter through the restaurant or through a back courtyard door), Charlie's is an intimate bar with lots of plush seating. The crowd is made up of young professionals. Nightly from 8. No cover. 141 E. Bay St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-6242.

### Meritage

Lots of appetizers and wine served until 1 am, a trendy crowd and convenient downtown location keep this bar high on the popularity list. Daily from 5 pm. No cover. 235 E. Bay St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-8181.

#### **Pavilion Bar**

Considered Charleston's swankiest rooftop bar, this place has metro views, a small pool, glass walls that keep the wind at bay and space heaters for chilly nights. High prices and the lack of drink specials draw a crowd of thirty- to fiftysomethings. It's above the Market Pavilion Hotel—enter through the hotel lobby. Daily from 5 pm. No cover. 225 E. Bay St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-0500.

#### **Red's Ice House**

If you want to be outside on the water, go to Red's for live music, drinks and appetizer specials. A former icehouse, Red's draws twenty- and thirtysomethings and is a great summer hangout. It's on Shem Creek, near all the seafood restaurants. Daily from 5 pm. No cover. 98 Church St., Mount Pleasant. Phone 843-388-0003.

#### **Sermet's Corner**

Located above Sermet's Restaurant, this bar offers an eclectic, artsy setting with a great wine selection and lots of cool ambience. Live music most nights. Thursday-Saturday from 8:30 pm. Cover US\$3-\$5. 275 King St., Charleston. Phone 843-853-7775.

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### **Dance Clubs and Nightclubs**

#### **City Bar**

This downtown nightclub is in the Historic District within walking distance of most restaurants and hotels. Comfy sofas, cool lighting and a long bar, plus dance, pop or Motown music most nights. Open Thursday-Saturday from 8:30 pm. Cover US\$5. 192 E. Bay St. (at the corner of Faber Street), Charleston. Phone 843-577-7383.

#### **Club Tango**

In a former warehouse, this multilevel club has high ceilings, dance cages, waterfalls and a rollicking weekend scene. Open Thursday-Saturday from 9 pm. Cover varies. 39 Hutson St., Charleston. Phone 843-577-2822.

#### **J.B. Pivots Beach Club**

This is the place for dancing the shag, South Carolina's state dance (the Charleston Shag Club is unofficially based there). Ask about free shag lessons on weekday nights. Open Tuesday-Sunday from 7 pm. Cover US\$5. 1662 Savannah Highway, Charleston. Phone 843-571-3668.

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### **Live Music**

#### **Music Farm**

Located in an old railroad building on the National Historic Register, this cavernous club has lots of atmosphere and a nice dance floor. Live bands, including many well-known touring rock and pop groups, perform about four nights a week. Nightly from 8. Cover US\$3-\$22. 32 Ann St., Charleston. Phone 843-853-3276 or 843-722-8904.

#### **Pluto Rocks**

This bar features a dueling piano show that starts at 9 pm. The primarily older crowd thins out around 10 pm, when the college-age set moves in. Open Thursday-Saturday from 7 pm. Cover US\$3. 479 King St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-1088.

#### **Trio Club**

Live bands on Friday and Saturday, martini specialties, sleek decor plus an outdoor bar in back make this a favorite nightspot. Open Thursday-Saturday from 9 pm. Cover US\$5. 139 Calhoun St., Charleston. Phone 843-965-5333.

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### **Performing Arts**

Several performing-arts groups entertain at the lovely Dock Street Theatre in Charleston. The theater, built in 1736, occupies the same spot as one of the nation's first performance halls. Other venues in the city include the Gaillard Municipal Auditorium, where the Charleston Opera Company and the Charleston Symphony perform, and the North Charleston Performing Arts Center.

Several annual festivals celebrate the performing arts, most notably Spoleto USA and Piccolo Spoleto Festival, during which hundreds of events take place. For three weeks May-June each year, the arts take over Charleston, and events ranging from jazz to opera and theater attract large numbers of visitors. The MOJA Arts Festival in late September is another lively event, celebrating African-American culture through theater, dance and music performances.

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### **Dance**

#### **Charleston Ballet Theatre**

Charleston's ballet company performs classical and contemporary dance at locations around the city, including the

Garden Theater and Gaillard Auditorium. 477 King St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-7334.

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## Music

### Charleston Symphony Orchestra

The city's orchestra presents its MasterWorks, Downtown Pops, Twilight Pops at Gaillard Auditorium; the Sotille Chamber Series at the Sotille Theater; the Light and Lively Pops at Charleston Southern University, and more. 14 George St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-7528. <http://www.charlestonsymphony.com>.

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## Ticket Brokers

### Ticketmaster

Buy tickets over the phone or in person at any Publix Supermarket. Phone 843-554-6060. <http://www.ticketmaster.com>.

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## Spectator Sports

If you want to see major-league sports while in Charleston, you'll have to turn on the television. The city's biggest claim to sports fame is the South Carolina Stingrays, a member of the East Coast Hockey League. The team plays home games October-April at the North Charleston Coliseum. Baseball fans can check out the Charleston Riverdogs, a Class-A farm team of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays. They play home games April-September at Joseph P. Riley Jr. Park downtown, which overlooks the Ashley River. Strong teams at the College of Charleston and The Citadel continue to make watching college basketball a popular pastime. The Charleston Battery soccer team, a member of the USISL A-League, plays April-September in Blackbaud Stadium on Daniel Island. Also on Daniel Island, the Family Circle Tennis Cup is held every April in Town Center Park. This tournament is one of the longest-running women's professional tennis events in the world.

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## SHOPPING

Look in the many specialty shops for real Carolina treasures—native crafts such as handmade pottery, handcrafted furniture and sweetgrass baskets. They are often made on the same Market and Broad street corners where they're sold. (Don't expect bargains: These native crafts have become highly prized, and their prices have escalated accordingly.) You'll also find open-air crafts stalls in the Old City Market. Charleston is well-known for its selection of antiques. Many of the shops are located on lower King Street and in the surrounding area. Galleries and boutiques are also common, and nearby Mount Pleasant has some good specialty shops, as well as Towne Center—an outdoor mall with lots of chain stores and a movie theater. For those seeking standard shopping, Charleston has its share of department stores and malls.

**Shopping Hours:** Shops downtown and in other neighborhoods are generally open weekdays and Saturday 9 or 10 am-5 or 5:30 pm. Area malls and shopping centers are open until 8 or 9 pm Monday-Saturday. On Sunday, many shops downtown, particularly those that are part of a chain, are open noon-5 pm.

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## Antique Stores

### Caropolis Antiques

Located in West Ashley, this shop has good bargains on country-style pieces. Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm. 814 St. Andrews Blvd., Charleston. Phone 843-763-7080.

### King Street Antique Mall

Customers can find interior decorating, fine arts and collectibles there. Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sundays, 1-6 pm. King Street (between Ann and Mary streets), Charleston. Phone 843-723-2211.

### Peterson Antiques

This mainstay in Charleston's antique district has interesting books, furniture, and glass and porcelain objects. Monday-Saturday 10:30 am-5 pm. 210 King St., Charleston. Phone 843-571-0577.

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## Factory Outlets

### LeCreuset Factory Outlet

You can receive 30% to 50% off the retail prices of this French company's porcelain-enameled, cast-iron cookware and accessories. The shop, conveniently located on King Street's busiest stretch, also features seconds and discontinued items. Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday 12-5 pm. 241 King St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-4191.

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## Galleries

### Jim Booth Art Gallery

Self-taught artist Jim Booth captures the beauty of the Low Country through his paintings. A prolific artist, he has become known for his real-life authenticity. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm. 1929 Maybank Highway, James Island. Phone 843-795-8244. Toll-free 800-696-5772.

### **John Carroll Doyle Art Gallery**

Born in Charleston, Doyle creates impressionist paintings of subjects that range from garden views to blues musicians. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm. 54 Broad St., Charleston. Phone 843-577-7344.

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## **Markets**

### **Old City Market Area**

This covered-stall area has crafts, jewelry, clothes, food items, estate silver and sweetgrass baskets. Surrounding the stalls are many more shops, including State Street Market and Rainbow Market, which are in two buildings dating to the 1800s (check out Good Scents, filled to the ceiling with perfume and toiletries). Daily 9 am-6 pm. Market Street, Charleston.

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## **Specialty Stores**

### **Ben Silver**

David Letterman has worn a Ben Silver tie, but the company's 800-plus designs of blazer buttons are its claim to fame. Monday-Saturday 9 am-6 pm. 149 King St., Charleston. Phone 843-577-4556.

### **Charleston Crafts**

A selection of jewelry, quilts, pottery, weavings and more, most created by local artists. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5:30 pm. 38 Queen St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-2938.

### **Croghan's Jewel Box**

Located in an 18th-century building, Croghan's is where Charlestonians shop for christenings, anniversaries, weddings and other important occasions. You can find estate and antique jewelry, designer collections, rice spoons, and estate and new silver. Monday-Friday 9:30 am-5:30 pm, Saturday 10 am-5 pm. 308 King St., Charleston. Phone 843-723-3594.

### **Historic Charleston Foundation Preservation Center's Museum Shop**

This store has many great items with local emphasis, including a wonderful selection of books. The HCF also operates a reproduction gift shop, with furniture and accessories, at its headquarters on King Street. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 2-5 pm. 108 Meeting St., Charleston. Phone 843-724-8484.

### **Preservation Society of Charleston**

This outlet sells books, tapes, sweetgrass baskets, stationery, prints and other items of local interest. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm. 147 King St., Charleston. Phone 843-722-4630.

### **The Sugar Plantation**

This candy shop has melt-in-your-mouth pralines (eat them within a few hours or they harden and aren't as good), fudge, Charleston Chews, Olde Colony Bakery benne wafers (a famous Charleston cookie with sesame seeds), divinity and just about every other southern confection. Monday-Wednesday 9:30 am-10 pm, Thursday-Saturday 9:30 am-11 pm. 48 N. Market St., Charleston. Phone 843-853-3924.

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## **SECURITY**

### **Personal Safety**

Charleston is no more dangerous than most U.S. cities of its size. Most of the areas traveled by visitors are reasonably safe, but use common sense and be alert after dark. Be aware of pickpockets and purse snatchers in crowded areas, such as the Old City Market area. Unlit, deserted areas in the parks and in downtown should be avoided at night. Ask your hotel's concierge or front-desk staff for advice about the areas and attractions you wish to visit.

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### **Health**

In a medical emergency, dial 911. Most Charleston hospitals have 24-hour emergency rooms and 24-hour pharmacies. Chain drugstores such as CVS also have pharmacies, which remain open until 8 or 9 pm.

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### **Disabled Advisory**

Some historic buildings, attractions and business locations are still not handicapped accessible, but many are.

The Disabilities Board of Charleston County provides services and support to disabled people (phone 843-805-5800).

South Carolina Services Information System (toll-free 800-894-0415) is a central source of information about services available in South Carolina, including transportation, used equipment and personal care for persons with disabilities and seniors older than 60. Transportation sources include Rural Transportation Management Association (toll-free 800-966-6631) and Tel-A-Ride (phone 843-747-0007). Contact agencies prior to arriving, as there is usually an application process involved.

*The Official Visitors Guide to the Charleston Area*, available through the visitors center and the Convention and Visitors Bureau, rates attractions to provide degrees of accessibility and also notes many area restaurants that are handicapped accessible. The Medical University of South Carolina also publishes a pamphlet, *Accessibility Guide to Greater Charleston*, which identifies handicapped-accessible features of area restaurants, shops, accommodations, attractions and other businesses. It is available through the visitors center and the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

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## HOTELS

Charleston has a great variety of accommodations, including world-class hotels, historic inns, bed-and-breakfasts, economy hotel chains and beach-house rentals. There are many choices in the Historic District, as well as along Highway 17. In general, the farther away from the downtown district you go, the less expensive accommodations will be (unless you're heading in the direction of a beach). If you're looking for affordability, you'll probably find that the best bargains are hotels in the North Charleston area. During special events such as Spoleto USA, Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, and the annual fall and spring home tours, rates are at their highest. High season is the fall and spring, yet both summer and winter are becoming almost equally as expensive as Charleston gains in popularity with travelers. Book as far in advance as possible.

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## City

### Ansonborough Inn

21 Hasell St 29401 TEL: (1)843/723-1655 FAX: (1)843/577-6888  
[info@ansonboroughinn.com](mailto:info@ansonboroughinn.com) <http://www.ansonboroughinn.com>

### Battery Carriage House Inn 1843

20 S Battery 29401 TEL: (1)843/727-3100 FAX: (1)843/727-3130  
<http://www.charleston-inns.com>

### Best Western King Charles Inn

237 Meeting St 29401 TEL: (1)843/723-7451 FAX: (1)843/723-2041  
[gm@kingcharlesinn.com](mailto:gm@kingcharlesinn.com) <http://www.kingcharlesinn.com>

### Charleston Place

205 Meeting St 29401-3133 TEL: (1)843/722-4900 FAX: (1)843/722-0728  
[cpresmgr@charlestonplace.com](mailto:cpresmgr@charlestonplace.com) <http://www.charlestonplacehotel.com>

### Charleston Riverview Hotel

170 Lockwood Dr 29403 TEL: (1)843/723-3000 FAX: (1)843/720-0844  
<http://www.charlestonriverviewhotel.com>

### Church Street Inn

177 Church St 29401 TEL: (1)843/722-3420 FAX: (1)843/853-7306

### Doubletree Guest Ste Historic Charleston

181 Church St 29401 TEL: (1)843/577-2644 FAX: (1)843/577-2697  
[chscs\\_dt\\_guest@hilton.com](mailto:chscs_dt_guest@hilton.com) <http://www.doubletree.com>

### Elliott House Inn

78 Queen St 29401 TEL: (1)843/723-1855 FAX: (1)843/722-1567  
<http://www.elliotthouseinn.com>

### Embassy Suites Hotel Historic District

337 Meeting St 29403 TEL: (1)843/723-6900 FAX: (1)843/723-6938  
<http://www.embassysuites.com/en/es/hotels/index.jhtml?ctyhocn=CHSESES&adId=CHSESESbnr,HTI,30>

### French Quarter Inn

166 Church St 45019 TEL: (1)843/722-1900 FAX: (1)843/722-5682  
<http://fqjcharleston.com>

#### **Fulton Lane Inn**

202 King St 29401 TEL: (1)843/720-2600 FAX: (1)843/720-2940  
[dwilson@charminginns.com](mailto:dwilson@charminginns.com) <http://www.fultonlaneinn.com>

#### **Harbour View Inn**

2 Vendue Range 29401 TEL: (1)843/853-8439 FAX: (1)843/853-4034  
[daniel.wilson@mindspring.com](mailto:daniel.wilson@mindspring.com) <http://www.harbourviewcharleston.com>

#### **Hilton Charleston Harbor Resort & Marina**

20 Patriots Point Rd 29464 TEL: (1)843/856-0028 FAX: (1)843/856-8313  
[information@charlestonharborresort.com](mailto:information@charlestonharborresort.com) <http://www.charlestonharborresort.com>

#### **Holiday Inn Charleston-Mills House**

115 Meeting St 29401 TEL: (1)843/577-2400 FAX: (1)843/722-0623  
<http://www.millshouse.com>

#### **Indigo Inn**

1 Maiden Lane 29401 TEL: (1)843/577-5900 FAX: (1)843/577-0378  
<http://www.indigoinn.com>

#### **Inn at Middleton Place**

4290 Ashley River Rd 29414 TEL: (1)843/556-0500 FAX: (1)843/556-5673

#### **John Rutledge House Inn**

116 Broad St 29401 TEL: (1)843/723-7999 FAX: (1)843/720-2615  
<http://www.johnrutledgehouseinn.com>

#### **Kings Courtyard Inn**

198 King St 29401 TEL: (1)843/723-7000 FAX: (1)843/720-2608  
[dwilson@charminginns.com](mailto:dwilson@charminginns.com) <http://www.kingscourtyardinn.com>

#### **Maison Du Pre'**

317 E Bay St 29401 TEL: (1)843/723-8691 FAX: (1)843/723-3722  
<http://www.maisondupre.com>

#### **Planters Inn**

112 N Market St 29401 TEL: (1)843/722-2345 FAX: (1)843/577-2125  
[reservations@plantersinn.com](mailto:reservations@plantersinn.com) <http://www.plantersinn.com>

#### **Renaissance Charleston Hotel**

68 Wentworth St 29401 TEL: (1)843/534-0300 FAX: (1)843/534-0700  
<http://www.renaissancehotels.com>

#### **The Anchorage Inn**

26 Vendue Range 29401 TEL: (1)843/723-8300 FAX: (1)843/723-9543  
[theanchorinn@aol.com](mailto:theanchorinn@aol.com) <http://www.anchoragencharleston.com>

#### **The Historic Francis Marion Hotel**

387 King St 29403 TEL: (1)843/722-0600 FAX: (1)843/853-2186  
<http://www.francismarioncharleston.com>

#### **The Jasmine House**

64 Hasell St 29401 TEL: (1)843/577-5900 FAX: (1)843/577-0378

<http://www.jasminehouseinn.com>

#### The Lodge Alley Inn

195 E Bay St 29401 TEL: (1)843/722-1611 FAX: (1)561/912-7979

<http://www.bluegreenrentals.com/content/index.cfm/bgrAction/getPropertyDetail/propertyid/20>

#### The Meeting Street Inn

173 Meeting St 29401 TEL: (1)843/723-1882 FAX: (1)843/577-0851

<http://www.meetingstreetinn.com>

#### Two Meeting Street Inn

Two Meeting St 29401 TEL: (1)843/723-7322 FAX:

<http://www.Twomeetingstreetinn.com>

#### Vendue Inn

19 Vendue Range 29401 TEL: (1)843/577-7970 FAX: (1)843/577-2913

[info@vendueinn.com](mailto:info@vendueinn.com) <http://www.vendueinn.com>

#### Victoria House Inn

208 King St 29401 TEL: (1)843/720-2944 FAX: (1)843/720-2930

<http://www.thevictoriahouseinn.com>

#### Wentworth Mansion

149 Wentworth St 29401 TEL: (1)843/853-1886 FAX: (1)843/720-5290

[bseidler@charminginns.com](mailto:bseidler@charminginns.com) <http://www.wentworthmansion.com>

## PRACTICALITIES

### Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Canadians need to show proof of citizenship (including a photo ID) to enter the U.S and re-enter Canada. A passport is recommended. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier prior to departure.

**Population:** 98,795.

**Time Zone:** 5 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (-5 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 110 volts.

**Telephone Codes:** 843, area code.

## Money

### Currency Exchange

The best way to exchange money is at ATMs, using a credit or debit card. ATMs are located outside most banks and in most convenience stores and supermarkets. Banks are generally open Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, with drive-in service usually open a half-hour earlier or later.

## Currency Exchange Rates

US Dollar	United States Dollar	US Dollar	United States Dollar
\$10	10.00	\$200	200.00
\$20	20.00	\$400	400.00
\$30	30.00	\$600	600.00
\$40	40.00	\$800	800.00

\$50	50.00	\$1000	1,000.00
\$60	60.00	\$1200	1,200.00
\$70	70.00	\$1400	1,400.00
\$80	80.00	\$1600	1,600.00
\$90	90.00	\$1800	1,800.00
\$100	100.00	\$2000	2,000.00

### Taxes

Sales tax in Charleston County is 6% on all items including food. A 12% hospitality tax is added to hotel bills.

### Tipping

The average tip on a meal, taxi ride or other service is 15%-20%.

## Weather

Charleston's climate, like the rest of coastal South Carolina, is mild and humid up until the beginning of summer, when the heat index jumps. January temperatures are moderate, but most range 37-59 F/3-14 C. Expect temperatures to run 53-76 F/11-24 C along the coast in April, 61-83 F/16-27 C in May. Severe thunderstorms can occur in spring. Visitors expecting to enjoy the beaches will find pleasant conditions through the summer, though July and August are hot (high 80s F/30 C to above 90 F/32+ C) and humid. Humidity at 60%-80% in high heat can take a lot out of you, so pace your sightseeing. Be aware that the season for hurricanes and tropical storms is June-November. The fall sees less humidity and temperatures range 55-84 F/12-28 C. Indian summer lasts through November, with dry days and temperatures from the low 40s F/5 C to the upper 60s F/18 C.

## Weather Forecast

### Current Weather Condition








**69 °F**  
**21 °C**

OVERCAST

**Pressure:** 1010.87 Millibars  
**Dew Point:** 68 °F / 20 °C  
**Humidity:** 93%  
**Visibility:** 1 Miles  
**Wind:** 8 MPH (WSW)  
**Comfort Index:** 71 °F / 22 °C  
**Precipitation:** LIGHT RAIN  
**Last Updated:** 9/26/2005 6:00:51 PM

### Extended Forecast Beginning 9/27/2005

TUE	Weather Condition	Day Hi	Day Low
	CLOUDY	<b>77 °F</b> <b>25 °C</b>	<b>59 °F</b> <b>15 °C</b>
WED	Weather Condition	Day Hi	Day Low
	MORE SUN THAN CLOUDS	<b>77 °F</b> <b>25 °C</b>	<b>50 °F</b> <b>10 °C</b>
THU	Weather Condition	Day Hi	Day Low
	SUNNY	<b>82 °F</b> <b>28 °C</b>	<b>59 °F</b> <b>15 °C</b>
FRI	Weather Condition	Day Hi	Day Low
	CLOUDY	<b>64 °F</b> <b>18 °C</b>	<b>39 °F</b> <b>4 °C</b>

SAT	Weather Condition	Day Hi	Day Low
	SUNNY	64 °F 18 °C	42 °F 6 °C

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## What to Wear

Hot and humid springs and summers call for light, breathable clothes. Sunscreen and hats are essential, both on the beach and walking along downtown. Beachwear stays at the beach or pool for Charlestonians, however. Air-conditioning is everywhere, so even on swelteringly hot days a light sweater or jacket is handy for the office, a mall, the movies or other well-chilled places.

Although it rarely snows, winter days can bite because it's a damp, "to the bone" cold. Heavy wool items are not as important as layering, which seems to do the trick in any weather. Unless you're walking around on the coldest of days, you won't ever need more than light gloves, a scarf and a medium-weight coat.

Business attire is probably more casual than in most major cities in the South. Many men wear khaki or linen pants with a button-down collar or polo shirt, and women wear slacks and a twinset. Only the most conservative industries or meetings require conservative business suits. Although locals don't always dress in formal wear to dine in the area's best restaurants, they generally opt for something more elegant than jeans and T-shirts.

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## Communication

### Internet Access

Internet cafes are not common in Charleston, but most hotels offer access in rooms.

### Charleston County Library

This main branch has 30-40 computers with free Internet access. 68 Calhoun St., Charleston. Phone 843-805-6801. <http://www.ccpl.org>.

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### Mail and Package Services

#### U.S. Post Office

Charleston's main branch. Monday-Friday 8 am-6 pm and Saturday 9:30 am-2 pm. 7075 Cross Country Road, Charleston. Phone 843-760-5406.

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### Newspapers and Magazines

*The Post and Courier* is Charleston's daily newspaper, available from curbside coin boxes, convenience stores and bookstores. Other local publications include *Charleston Magazine* (a glossy, bimonthly magazine focusing on local culture and events), *Charleston Regional Business Journal* (published twice monthly), *Charleston City Paper* (a free and indispensable weekly resource events in town—including gallery openings, live music and performances) and *Skirt!* magazine (a free monthly focusing on women's issues).

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## Transportation

Charleston experiences heavy seasonal traffic (May is a popular time for vacationers). The real heart and soul of the city is the Historic District, and it's best explored on foot.

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### Air

Charleston International Airport (CHS) has modern facilities, several restaurants and offers Wi-Fi access (<http://www.chs-airport.com>). The airport is 13 mi/20 km northwest of the city center.

A taxi or shuttle is the best way to get into town. A taxi ride to downtown should cost about US\$25. The fare to Mount Pleasant is about US\$30. A shuttle service, such as the Mount Pleasant shuttle, costs US\$45-\$75 for one to two passengers round-trip and is available by appointment only (843-971-4901). Some hotels provide shuttle service to and from the airport, and major car rental agencies staff branches there. Car services or limousines also provide rides into town.

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### Bus

#### Greyhound

Provides daily transportation to and from the city. The terminal is located in North Charleston. 3610 Dorchester Road, Charleston. Phone 843-747-4247 for rates and schedule information. Toll-free 800-231-2222.

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### Car

Getting around Charleston by car can be a challenge—the city's system of one-way streets requires patience. Parking is limited downtown: A parking garage is your best bet.

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### Public Transportation

#### Buses

Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority operates the regular bus system that runs throughout most of downtown Charleston as well as to Sullivan's Island, Isle of Palms, James Island, West Ashley and Kiawah Island. Buses are clean, modern and air-conditioned. Bus service targets Charlestonians who live in North Charleston and work downtown. These buses run frequently. Buses to other areas run about once an hour. All run daily 5:30 am-10 pm with more frequent service during morning and evening rush hours. A single ticket costs US\$1, and an all-day pass costs US\$3. Phone 843-747-0922 for route and schedule information.

#### DASH (Downtown Area Shuttle)

The South Carolina Electric and Gas Company provides in-town bus service, including the DASH (Downtown Area Shuttle), which operates from the visitors center and travels throughout the Historic District. You can park your car at the visitors center while you explore. The shuttle operates daily 6 am-midnight. Closed on major holidays. Single rides are US\$1, and daily passes are available for US\$3. The visitors center is at 375 Meeting St., Charleston.

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### Ship

Cruise ships dock at Liberty Square, the ferry facility on Concord Street in the Historic District. The terminal is accessible on foot, but passengers traveling with luggage or at night are better off calling a taxi.

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### Taxi

Taxis are available in Charleston but you must order one by phone.

#### Yellow Cab

Available 24 hours a day. Phone 843-577-6565.

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### Train

#### Amtrak

Trains operate daily from Charleston to points along the East Coast. 4565 Gaynor Ave., Charleston. Phone 843-744-8264. Toll-free 800-872-7245.

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## For More Information

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### Tourist Offices

#### Charleston Visitor Reception and Transportation Center

A renovated former train station houses the Visitor Reception and Transportation Center, where you can find information and view *Forever Charleston*, a 20-minute film about the city's idiosyncrasies. The center also provides all-day parking, and you can leave your car there and take one of the city's many tours (most citywide tours depart from there) or ride the DASH (the city shuttle) into the downtown area. You can also buy tickets to area attractions. Daily 8:30 am-5 or 5:30 pm. 375 Meeting St., Charleston. Toll-free 800-868-8118. <http://www.charlestoncvb.com>.

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## CALENDAR

Charleston's residents are notoriously proud of their city, and their annual events reflect this civic pride. The internationally recognized arts extravaganza Spoleto Festival U.S.A., the Festival of Houses and Gardens, the Low Country Oyster Festival and the Lowcountry Blues Bash are a few of the city's most popular events. Performances by the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, Charleston Ballet Theatre and Charleston Stage Company offer another kind of culture. Exhibits at the Gibbes Museum of Art, the South Carolina Stingrays hockey games and the Charleston Battery soccer matches round out Charleston's overflowing calendar.

For detailed information about upcoming events in the Charleston area, contact the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. Phone 843-853-8000. Toll-free 800-774-0006. <http://www.charlestoncvb.com>.

To call any of the numbers listed in this calendar from outside the U.S. or Canada, you must first dial your country's international access code, followed by the U.S. country code, 1.

Information in this calendar is subject to change and should be confirmed.

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## September, 2005

**Early September—Minor-League Baseball.** The Charleston RiverDogs, a single-A affiliate of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, play home games at Joseph P. Riley Jr. Park, 360 Fishburne St. For information, call 843-723-7241. For tickets, call 843-577-3647. <http://www.devilrays.com>. Concludes early September

**Early-Mid September—Soccer.** The Charleston Battery, the 2003 A-League champions, play regular-season home games at Blackbaud Stadium, 1990 Daniel Island Drive. For information and tickets, call 843-971-4625. <http://www.charlestonbattery.com>. Season concludes mid September

**23-30 Sep—MOJA Arts Festival.** A multidisciplinary arts event that showcases African-American and Caribbean culture in free and ticketed events. Highlights include classical-music, gospel, jazz and R&B concerts, dance and theater performances, poetry slams, a juried art exhibition, traditional crafts, ethnic food, and children's activities. Various theaters and churches. For information, call 843-554-6060. For tickets, call Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.mojafestival.com>. Continues through 3 Oct

**Late September—Concert.** The Charleston Symphony Orchestra performs its regular concerts in Gaillard Auditorium, 77 Calhoun St., and special-event concerts at the North Charleston Performing Arts Center, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information, call 843-723-7528. For tickets, call Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.charlestonsymphony.com>. Continues through late April 2006

**5 Sep—Labor Day.** Public holiday.

**9-30 Sep—Art Exhibit.** *A Hundred Years at the Gibbes.* Celebrates the museum's first century of exhibits with works from pivotal and local artists. Gibbes Museum of Art, 135 Meeting St. Phone 843-722-2706. <http://www.gibbesmuseum.org>. Continues through 31 Jan 2006

**22-30 Sep—Fall Candlelight Tours of Homes and Gardens.** Thursday-Saturday, the Charleston Preservation Society conducts evening walking tours through historic residences and gardens along six to eight blocks of Charleston. For information and tickets, call 843-722-4630. <http://www.preservationsociety.org>. Continues through 29 Oct

**Throughout September—Theater.** Charleston Stage Company presents more than 150 productions of dramas, comedies and Broadway musicals at the Dock Street Theatre, 135 Church St. For information, call 843-577-5967. For tickets, call 843-577-7183. <http://www.charlestonstage.com>. Continues through late April 2006

**Throughout September—Exhibit.** *Foundations of Fashion: Two Centuries of Undergarments and Beauty Aids.* This three-part exhibit will examine methods women used to control the upper and lower halves of their bodies and various beauty aids—from the tortuous to the forerunners of modern cosmetics. Charleston Museum, 360 Meeting St. Phone 843-722-2996. <http://www.charlestonmuseum.org>. Continues through 14 Feb 2006

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## October, 2005

**Early-Late October—Dance.** Charleston Ballet Theatre presents classical and contemporary productions at Suttle Theatre, 44 George St., and Gaillard Auditorium, 77 Calhoun St. For information and tickets, call 843-723-7334. <http://www.charlestonballet.org>. Continues through late March 2006

**Mid-Late October—Hockey.** The South Carolina Stingrays host regular-season home games at the North Charleston Coliseum, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information and tickets, call 843-744-2248 or Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.stingrayshockey.com>. Continues through early April 2006

**1-3 Oct—MOJA Arts Festival.** A multidisciplinary arts event that showcases African-American and Caribbean culture in free and ticketed events. Highlights include classical-music, gospel, jazz and R&B concerts, dance and theater performances, poetry slams, a juried art exhibition, traditional crafts, ethnic food, and children's activities. Various theaters and churches. For information, call 843-554-6060. For tickets, call Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.mojafestival.com>. Concludes 3 Oct

**1-29 Oct—Fall Candlelight Tours of Homes and Gardens.** Thursday-Saturday, the Charleston Preservation Society conducts evening walking tours through historic residences and gardens along six to eight blocks of Charleston. For information and tickets, call 843-722-4630. <http://www.preservationsociety.org>. Concludes 29 Oct

**9 Oct—Taste of Charleston.** More than 50 of Charleston's best restaurants present bite-size samples of their specialties. Events include the Waiters' Wine Race, an ice-carving competition and wine tastings. Boone Hall Plantation, Longpoint Road. For information, call 843-577-4030. <http://www.charlestonrestaurantassociation.com>.

**10 Oct—Columbus Day.** Public holiday.

**29 Oct—Summerville Ghost Walk and Harvest Moon Hayride.** Take a lantern-light tour through various downtown locations and hear the tales of spirits that still haunt the city streets. Town Square, Summerville (25 mi/40 km west of Charleston). For information and tickets, call 843-821-7260.

**Throughout October—Concert.** The Charleston Symphony Orchestra performs its regular concerts in Gaillard Auditorium, 77 Calhoun St., and special-event concerts at the North Charleston Performing Arts Center, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information, call 843-723-7528. For tickets, call Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.charlestonsymphony.com>. Continues through late April 2006

**Throughout October—Art Exhibit.** *A Hundred Years at the Gibbes.* Celebrates the museum's first century of exhibits with works from pivotal and local artists. Gibbes Museum of Art, 135 Meeting St. Phone 843-722-2706. <http://www.gibbesmuseum.org>. Continues through 31 Jan 2006

**Throughout October—Theater.** Charleston Stage Company presents more than 150 productions of dramas, comedies and Broadway musicals at the Dock Street Theatre, 135 Church St. For information, call 843-577-5967. For tickets, call 843-577-7183. <http://www.charlestonstage.com>. Continues through late April 2006

**Throughout October—Exhibit.** *Foundations of Fashion: Two Centuries of Undergarments and Beauty Aids.* This three-part exhibit will examine methods women used to control the upper and lower halves of their bodies and various beauty aids—from the tortuous to the forerunners of modern cosmetics. Charleston Museum, 360 Meeting St. Phone 843-722-2996. <http://www.charlestonmuseum.org>. Continues through 14 Feb 2006

## November, 2005

**24 Nov—Thanksgiving Day.** Public holiday.

**15 Nov—Horse Races.** More than 15,000 spectators turn out for Charleston's social and sporting event of the year, the Charleston Cup. Hollywood (20 mi/32 km west of Charleston). For information, call 843-577-5006 or the National Steeplechase Association at 410-392-0700.

**11 Nov—Veterans Day.** Public holiday.

**11-30 Nov—Holiday Festival of Lights.** Celebrate the holiday season with a 4-mi/6-km driving tour past displays created with 600,000 lights. Also Santa's Village with a holiday scene handsculpted from more than 50 tons of sand, holiday-music concerts, carousel and train rides, and more. James Island County Park, 871 Riverland Drive. For information, call 843-795-4386. <http://www.holidayfestivaloflights.com>. Continues through 1 Jan 2006

**Throughout November—Hockey.** The South Carolina Stingrays host regular-season home games at the North Charleston Coliseum, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information and tickets, call 843-744-2248 or Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.stingrayshockey.com>. Continues through early April 2006

**Throughout November—Concert.** The Charleston Symphony Orchestra performs its regular concerts in Gaillard Auditorium, 77 Calhoun St., and special-event concerts at the North Charleston Performing Arts Center, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information, call 843-723-7528. For tickets, call Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.charlestonsymphony.com>. Continues through late April 2006

**Throughout November—Theater.** Charleston Stage Company presents more than 150 productions of dramas, comedies and Broadway musicals at the Dock Street Theatre, 135 Church St. For information, call 843-577-5967. For tickets, call 843-577-7183. <http://www.charlestonstage.com>. Continues through late April 2006

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**Throughout November—Exhibit.** *Foundations of Fashion: Two Centuries of Undergarments and Beauty Aids.* This three-part exhibit will examine methods women used to control the upper and lower halves of their bodies and various beauty aids—from the tortuous to the forerunners of modern cosmetics. Charleston Museum, 360 Meeting St. Phone 843-722-2996. <http://www.charlestonmuseum.org>. Continues through 14 Feb 2006

**Throughout November—Dance.** Charleston Ballet Theatre presents classical and contemporary productions at Suttle Theatre, 44 George St., and Gaillard Auditorium, 77 Calhoun St. For information and tickets, call 843-723-7334. <http://www.charlestonballet.org>. Continues through late March 2006

## December, 2005

**3 Dec—Holiday Parade of Boats.** Approximately 50 boats participate in this annual holiday parade, which includes a

fireworks display. Waterfront Park, the Battery area and the USS *Yorktown* offer good views of the festivities. For information, call the city's Office of Cultural Affairs at 843-724-7305.

**25 Dec—Christmas Day.** Public holiday.

**31 Dec—First Night Charleston.** The city rings in the new year with a family-oriented, visual- and performing-arts festival. Marion Square, Gaillard Auditorium and the American Theater. For information, call 843-724-7305.

**Throughout December—Hockey.** The South Carolina Stingrays host regular-season home games at the North Charleston Coliseum, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information and tickets, call 843-744-2248 or Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.stingrayshockey.com>. Continues through early April 2006

**Throughout December—Dance.** Charleston Ballet Theatre presents classical and contemporary productions at Suttle Theatre, 44 George St., and Gaillard Auditorium, 77 Calhoun St. For information and tickets, call 843-723-7334. <http://www.charlestonballet.org>. Continues through late March 2006

**Throughout December—Theater.** Charleston Stage Company presents more than 150 productions of dramas, comedies and Broadway musicals at the Dock Street Theatre, 135 Church St. For information, call 843-577-5967. For tickets, call 843-577-7183. <http://www.charlestonstage.com>. Continues through late April 2006

**Throughout December—Exhibit.** *Foundations of Fashion: Two Centuries of Undergarments and Beauty Aids.* This three-part exhibit will examine methods women used to control the upper and lower halves of their bodies and various beauty aids—from the tortuous to the forerunners of modern cosmetics. Charleston Museum, 360 Meeting St. Phone 843-722-2996. <http://www.charlestonmuseum.org>. Continues through 14 Feb 2006

**Throughout December—Holiday Festival of Lights.** Celebrate the holiday season with a 4-mi/6-km driving tour past displays created with 600,000 lights. Also Santa's Village with a holiday scene handsculpted from more than 50 tons of sand, holiday-music concerts, carousel and train rides, and more. James Island County Park, 871 Riverland Drive. For information, call 843-795-4386. <http://www.holidayfestivaloflights.com>. Continues through 1 Jan 2006

**Throughout December—Art Exhibit.** *A Hundred Years at the Gibbes.* Celebrates the museum's first century of exhibits with works from pivotal and local artists. Gibbes Museum of Art, 135 Meeting St. Phone 843-722-2706. <http://www.gibbesmuseum.org>. Continues through 31 Jan 2006

**Throughout December—Concert.** The Charleston Symphony Orchestra performs its regular concerts in Gaillard Auditorium, 77 Calhoun St., and special-event concerts at the North Charleston Performing Arts Center, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information, call 843-723-7528. For tickets, call Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.charlestonsymphony.com>. Continues through late April 2006

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## January, 2006

**16 Jan—Martin Luther King Jr. Day.** Public holiday.

**29 Jan—Low Country Oyster Festival.** Two tractor-trailer loads—more than 65,000 lb/29,485 kg—of oysters served by the bucket, juried oyster-cooking competitions, oyster-shucking and oyster-eating contests, live entertainment, a children's oyster-costume contest and other children's activities. Boone Hall Plantation, 1235 Long Point Road. For information, call 843-577-4030. <http://www.charlestonrestaurantassociation.com>.

**1 Jan—Holiday Festival of Lights.** Celebrate the holiday season with a 4-mi/6-km driving tour past displays created with 600,000 lights. Also Santa's Village with a holiday scene handsculpted from more than 50 tons of sand, holiday-music concerts, carousel and train rides, and more. James Island County Park, 871 Riverland Drive. For information, call 843-795-4386. <http://www.holidayfestivaloflights.com>. Final day

**1 Jan—New Year's Day.** Public holiday.

**Throughout January—Exhibit.** *Foundations of Fashion: Two Centuries of Undergarments and Beauty Aids.* This three-part exhibit will examine methods women used to control the upper and lower halves of their bodies and various beauty aids—from the tortuous to the forerunners of modern cosmetics. Charleston Museum, 360 Meeting St. Phone 843-722-2996. <http://www.charlestonmuseum.org>. Continues through 14 Feb

**Throughout January—Concert.** The Charleston Symphony Orchestra performs its regular concerts in Gaillard Auditorium, 77 Calhoun St., and special-event concerts at the North Charleston Performing Arts Center, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information, call 843-723-7528. For tickets, call Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.charlestonsymphony.com>. Continues through late April

**Throughout January—Art Exhibit.** *A Hundred Years at the Gibbes.* Celebrates the museum's first century of exhibits with works from pivotal and local artists. Gibbes Museum of Art, 135 Meeting St. Phone 843-722-2706.

<http://www.gibbesmuseum.org>. Concludes 31 Jan

**Throughout January—Theater.** Charleston Stage Company presents more than 150 productions of dramas, comedies and Broadway musicals at the Dock Street Theatre, 135 Church St. For information, call 843-577-5967. For tickets, call 843-577-7183. <http://www.charlestonstage.com>. Continues through late April

**Throughout January—Hockey.** The South Carolina Stingrays host regular-season home games at the North Charleston Coliseum, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information and tickets, call 843-744-2248 or Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.stingrayshockey.com>. Continues through early April

**Throughout January—Dance.** Charleston Ballet Theatre presents classical and contemporary productions at Suttle Theatre, 44 George St., and Gaillard Auditorium, 77 Calhoun St. For information and tickets, call 843-723-7334. <http://www.charlestonballet.org>. Continues through late March

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**10-19 Feb—Bonterra Lowcountry Blues Bash.** More than 50 established and emerging musicians perform traditional, postmodern and innovative blues, jazz and zydeco music in mostly intimate venues, including select nightclubs, restaurants and hotels. Also a film series at the Charleston County Library, 68 Calhoun St. Tickets are sold at the door. For information, call 843-762-9125. <http://www.bluesbash.com>.

**17-19 Feb—Southeastern Wildlife Exposition.** This three-day celebration of nature and preservation features more than 500 artists and exhibitors in a sports expo and exhibits of paintings, carvings, sculptures, photographs, crafts and collectibles. Also demonstrations by live animals, family-oriented activities and presentations by special guests. Various parks, galleries, theaters and other venues. For information and tickets, call 843-723-1748. <http://www.sewe.com>.

**20 Feb—Presidents Day.** Public holiday.

**24-26 Feb—Charleston Cup Gymnastics.** More than 1,200 athletes from around the U.S. and the world compete in this annual gymnastics tournament. North Charleston Convention Center. For information, call 843-720-3895. <http://www.charlestoncup.com>.

**Throughout February—Dance.** Charleston Ballet Theatre presents classical and contemporary productions at Suttle Theatre, 44 George St., and Gaillard Auditorium, 77 Calhoun St. For information and tickets, call 843-723-7334. <http://www.charlestonballet.org>. Continues through late March

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## March, 2006

**Mid-Late March—Festival of Houses and Gardens.** Tours of approximately 150 colonial and antebellum private homes located throughout historic Charleston neighborhoods. Also luncheons, teas, plantation tours, harbor cruises and lectures. Make reservations early—the city fills up for this annual event. For information and tickets, call 843-722-3405. <http://www.historiccharleston.org>. Continues through mid April

**17-19 Mar—Charleston International Antiques Show.** More than 30 top national dealers exhibit their collections with an emphasis on furnishings and decorative pieces, as well as vintage jewelry, quilts, textiles, ceramics, silver and porcelain. Capt. James Misroon House, 40 E. Bay St. For information and tickets, call 843-722-3405. <http://www.historiccharleston.org>.

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## April, 2006

**Early-Mid April—Festival of Houses and Gardens.** Tours of approximately 150 colonial and antebellum private homes located throughout historic Charleston neighborhoods. Also luncheons, teas, plantation tours, harbor cruises and lectures. Make reservations early—the city fills up for this annual event. For information and tickets, call 843-722-3405. <http://www.historiccharleston.org>. Concludes mid April

**1 Apr—Cooper River Bridge Run.** The 10K run and 7K walk wind through historic downtown Charleston and end with a festival at Ansonborough Field, Calhoun and Concord streets. For information, call 843-792-0345. <http://www.bridgerun.com>.

**2 Apr—Lowcountry Cajun Festival.** Features the sounds of Cajun and zydeco music, as well as the tastes of authentic Creole and Cajun dishes such as jambalaya, fried crawfish tails, red rice and spicy sausages. Also a crawfish-eating contest, carnival games, displays by local artisans, children's activities and more. James Island County Park, 871 Riverland Drive. For information, call 843-795-4386. <http://www.ccprc.com/cajunfest.html>.

**8 Apr—PetFest.** This popular event features pet-oriented games, exhibits and entertainment, including Frisbee and flyball contests for dogs, an SPCA fun walk, informational expo and adoption centers. Mount Pleasant Palmetto Islands County Park, 444 Needlerush Parkway, Mount Pleasant. For information, call 843-795-4386. <http://www.ccprc.com>.

**8-16 Apr—Tennis.** Top international athletes compete in the Family Circle Cup, one of the world's longest-running women's professional tennis events and the only all-women's Tier-1 tournament in the U.S. Town Center Park, Daniel Island, 101 Seven Farms Drive. For information and tickets, call 843-856-7900. <http://www.familycirclecup.com>.

**Late April—North Charleston Art Festival.** More than 40 theatrical performances, art and photography exhibits, a statewide fine-crafts competition, hands-on children's activities, arts-and-craft booths, and more. North Charleston Performing Arts Center, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information, call 843-745-1087. Continues through early May

**Early April—Hockey.** The South Carolina Stingrays host regular-season home games at the North Charleston Coliseum, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information and tickets, call 843-744-2248 or Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.stingrayshockey.com>. Concludes early April

**Early April—Charleston Race Week.** Approximately 90 sailboats more than 20 ft/6 m long compete in several fleets on two courses through the Charleston Harbor. For information, call 843-545-2580. <http://www.charlestonraceweek.com> or <http://www.charlestonoceanracing.org>.

**Early-Late April—Minor-League Baseball.** The Charleston RiverDogs, a single-A affiliate of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, play home games at Joseph P. Riley Jr. Park, 360 Fishburne St. For information, call 843-723-7241. For tickets, call 843-577-3647. <http://www.devilrays.com>. Continues through early September

**Early-Late April—Soccer.** The Charleston Battery, the 2003 A-League champions, play regular-season home games at Blackbaud Stadium, 1990 Daniel Island Drive. For information and tickets, call 843-971-4625. <http://www.charlestonbattery.com>. Season continues through mid September

**Throughout April—Concert.** The Charleston Symphony Orchestra performs its regular concerts in Gaillard Auditorium, 77 Calhoun St., and special-event concerts at the North Charleston Performing Arts Center, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information, call 843-723-7528. For tickets, call Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.charlestonsymphony.com>. Concludes late April

**Throughout April—Theater.** Charleston Stage Company presents more than 150 productions of dramas, comedies

and Broadway musicals at the Dock Street Theatre, 135 Church St. For information, call 843-577-5967. For tickets, call 843-577-7183. <http://www.charlestonstage.com>. Concludes late April

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## May, 2006

**Early May—North Charleston Art Festival.** More than 40 theatrical performances, art and photography exhibits, a statewide fine-crafts competition, hands-on children's activities, arts-and-craft booths, and more. North Charleston Performing Arts Center, 5001 Coliseum Drive. For information, call 843-745-1087. Concludes early May

**20, 21 May—Sculpture in the South.** Approximately 25 national and international award-winning sculptors from across the southern U.S. set up booths to showcase works in bronze, wood, marble, alabaster, terra-cotta and other media. Azalea Park, South Main Street/Highway 17-A and West Fifth Street South, Summerville (25 mi/40 km west of Charleston). For information, call 843-851-7800. <http://www.sculptureinthesouth.com>.

**29 May—Memorial Day.** Public holiday.

**26-31 May—Spoleto Festival U.S.A.** One of the world's premier arts festivals features more than 120 symphonic, choral, chamber and jazz music concerts, as well as ballet, modern dance, opera, musical, theater and dramatic performances. There are also literary events and visual-arts exhibits. For information and tickets, call 843-579-3100. <http://www.spoletousa.org>. Continues through 11 Jun

**26-31 May—Piccolo Spoleto Festival.** This companion regional arts festival to Spoleto Festival U.S.A. celebrates the work of South Carolinian and other southeastern visual artists, musicians, actors and crafters in more than 700 events. Various venues. For information, call 843-724-7305. For tickets, call Ticketmaster at 843-554-6060. <http://www.piccolospoleto.com>. Continues through 11 Jun

**Throughout May—Minor-League Baseball.** The Charleston RiverDogs, a single-A affiliate of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, play home games at Joseph P. Riley Jr. Park, 360 Fishburne St. For information, call 843-723-7241. For tickets, call 843-577-3647. <http://www.devilrays.com>. Continues through early September

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## June, 2006

**9-11 Jun—Charleston Maritime and Tall Ships Festival.** Highlights include class-A tall ships in Charleston Harbor, free sailboat rides, shipyard tours, boat-building demonstrations, an artists market, marine exhibits, live music, evening parties and children's activities. Charleston Maritime Center, 10 Wharfside St. For information, contact the South Carolina Maritime Heritage Foundation at 843-722-1030. <http://www.charlestonmaritimefestival.com>.

**1-11 Jun—Spoleto Festival U.S.A.** One of the world's premier arts festivals features more than 120 symphonic, choral, chamber and jazz music concerts, as well as ballet, modern dance, opera, musical, theater and dramatic performances. There are also literary events and visual-arts exhibits. For information and tickets, call 843-579-3100. <http://www.spoletousa.org>. Concludes 11 Jun

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## July, 2006

**4 Jul—Independence Day.** Public holiday.

**Throughout July—Soccer.** The Charleston Battery, the 2003 A-League champions, play regular-season home games at Blackbaud Stadium, 1990 Daniel Island Drive. For information and tickets, call 843-971-4625. <http://www.charlestonbattery.com>. Season continues through mid September

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## August, 2006

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**Throughout August—Minor-League Baseball.** The Charleston RiverDogs, a single-A affiliate of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, play home games at Joseph P. Riley Jr. Park, 360 Fishburne St. For information, call 843-723-7241. For tickets, call 843-577-3647. <http://www.devilrays.com>. Continues through early September

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## Cayman Islands, North America

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### OVERVIEW

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#### Introduction

It's hard to resist getting in the ocean in the Cayman Islands. The water is warm, clear and often calm. The submarine scenery is among the best in the Caribbean. And frankly, there's not too much to hold your attention on shore.

Most visitors are happy to take the plunge. Even those who don't know how to dive or snorkel when they arrive will find these islands a great place to learn. If you've ever had the urge to see beneath the sea, you'll enjoy the Caymans.

Be aware, however, that the islands do not offer much in the way of geographic diversity, and just about everything costs more than it does at home. Of the three islands that make up the Caymans, Grand Cayman is the largest and the center of the tourism industry. Most visitors spend at least some time there, if not their entire vacation. The heavy influx of visitors to Grand Cayman has had a homogenizing effect on that island. With its traffic, chain restaurants and T-shirt shops, you could, on occasion, mistake crowded stretches of Seven Mile Beach for parts of Florida. The other islands, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, get fewer visitors.



Turquoise Water Lapping a White-sand Beach.

Although Hurricane Ivan, a category-five storm, hit Grand Cayman head on in September 2004, swift recovery efforts put tourism on the islands back in business just months after the storm.

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#### History

Columbus came upon the islands in 1503, naming them Las Tortugas because their only inhabitants were vast numbers of turtles. By the mid-1500s, they were known as the Caymanas, the Carib word for crocodile. They were frequently visited by ships—including pirate ships—in the 1500s and 1600s, but the first settlers didn't arrive until 1655, when deserters from the English army that was then capturing Jamaica made their way to Grand Cayman. Later arrivals were also from the British Isles—England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Slaves of African descent also played a role in the islands' development, though the Caymans never became lucrative plantation isles like others in the Caribbean. The slaves were emancipated in 1834, and thereafter some escaped slaves from other parts of the New World settled on the island.

Today, tourism is a large part of the economy. More than half a million people visit each year—80% are from the U.S. and Canada, but lately more Europeans have been discovering the islands. The other big business is finance: The Caymans are among the favorite offshore banking locales in the world. There are 380 banks based there, holding more than US\$450 billion in assets. On paper, there are nearly 34,000 registered companies who take advantage of the favorable tax status offered by the islands. The government opened a stock exchange in 1997. The Cayman Islands remain a British Crown Colony, with a governor appointed by the British monarch, though the islands retain a largely autonomous legislature.

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## Geography

The Cayman Islands are a trio of low-lying islands surrounded by vibrant coral reefs. They are limestone outcroppings—the tops of a submarine mountain range called the Cayman Ridge, which extends southwest from the Sierra Maestra range off the southeastern edge of Cuba. The islands lack rivers or streams because of the porous nature of the limestone rock. This lack of runoff gives the surrounding Caribbean Sea exceptional clarity with visibility depths of more than 120 ft/37 m. The islands are located 480 mi/770 km south of Miami, Florida, and 180 mi/290 km northwest of Jamaica. Grand Cayman is the largest of the three islands (76 sq mi/197 sq km), with George Town, the capital, serving as the center of business and commerce. Cayman Brac is smaller (14 sq mi/36 sq km). With a bluff that rises 140 ft/43 m above sea level, it has the most dramatic topography of all three islands. Little Cayman is the smallest of the islands (10 sq mi/26 sq km), and with its 203-acre/82-hectare Booby Pond Nature Reserve, it's home to the Caribbean's largest population of red-footed boobies. Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, known as the "sister islands," are 89 mi/143 km northeast of Grand Cayman and are separated by a channel about 7 mi/11 km wide.

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## Snapshot

The main attractions of the Cayman Islands include scuba diving, snorkeling, deep-sea fishing, beaches, shopping, good food, relaxation and investing.

If you are interested primarily in watersports, beautiful beaches and exploring duty-free stores, you'll enjoy the Caymans. Fine dining is big in the Caymans, with a diverse nightlife that can go until 3 am. The people are friendly, the communities are safe and clean, and you won't be harassed by roadside vendors.

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## Port Information

### Location

Of the three islands, Grand Cayman is the only one with the capacity to host cruise ships. The ships anchor outside the harbor west of George Town. Passengers are tendered to two terminals in the center of town, near the main Port Authority dock. Known as the North and South Terminals, they're just a short distance apart. Most of the services (phones, restrooms, a small information booth, a taxi dispatch station and a new business center with Internet access) are located at the North Terminal. In rough weather, ships may anchor off the island's southern coast and tender passengers to Spotts, which is about 4 mi/6 km from George Town. Passengers are transported to George Town for shopping and to the various attractions by bus or taxi.

A few years ago, the Port Authority teamed up with a local architect to add vibrant colors and traditional style to the North and South Terminals. Additionally, in spring 2004, the Authority entered into a US\$17.5 million agreement with the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) for the construction of another cruise-ship facility in the area, including a 200-ft/60-m pier. Damages from Hurricane Ivan were minimal to the existing facilities, and construction on the new facilities reconvened once power was restored to the town. Completion is anticipated by the end of 2005.

The tourist information office is at Cricket Square on Elgin Avenue, east of the cruise-ship terminals. It's open Monday-Friday 8:30 am-5 pm. Phone 345-949-0623.

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## Potpourri

During the Hurricane of 1932, residents of Cayman Brac sought shelter in the many caves on the island. The caves saved many lives then, as they did during Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. Ivan was the islands' second most devastating hurricane in history.

The national flower is the wild banana orchid. These small scented flowers with purple tips bloom after May and June rains. There are more than two dozen varieties of orchids growing in the Cayman Islands, including five found nowhere else in the world. Some are reportedly so small they can't be seen without a magnifying glass.

Most visitors pronounce the name Cayman with the accent on the first syllable. Though they won't tell you it's wrong, most islanders pronounce it *Cay-MAN*. Also, Caymanians usually refer to their homeland simply as Cayman, rather than "the Cayman Islands" or "the Caymans."

Residents from the sister islands, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, find it offensive when visitors or the international media refer to the islands as "The Grand Cayman Islands."

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## SEE AND DO

### Sightseeing

Cayman Brac is the best island for hikes and a little climbing on your sightseeing journey. With a bluff that rises to 140

ft/43 m at East End, you can climb the natural steps up to Peter's Cave and then continue on to the lighthouse—the highest point in the Cayman Islands.

Sightseeing on Little Cayman is best done on a bicycle or in a Jeep. Make sure to stop at the Booby Pond Reserve and take the unmarked side roads, which usually lead to great deserted beaches.

On Grand Cayman, it's probably best to invest in a full- or half-day tour of the island that takes you to all the main attractions—Hell, the Turtle Farm, Seven Mile Beach, downtown shopping, the National Museum, Pedro Castle, the Blow Holes and Wreck of the Ten Sails Garden in East End, and the Botanical Park in North Side. Of course, you can always do it yourself with a good map and a rental car. Do visit the world famous Stingray City for half or full day and plan to see the sights below water on one or two dives. Try a sunset cruise, too, preferably on the *Jolly Roger*, where for US\$25, you can enjoy a fabulous sunset on a pirate ship with pirates and complimentary drinks. For a bird's-eye view of Grand Cayman, try a helicopter tour.

*Note:* Gambling is illegal in the Cayman Islands, so there are no casinos. In keeping with this law, cruise ships must also close their casinos while in Cayman waters.

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## Recreation

Recreation opportunities include scuba diving, snorkeling, fishing, caving, bird-watching and nature-trail hikes. There are also some watersports activities such as kayaking within the reef and Jet Skiing. There are no golf courses on Cayman Brac or Little Cayman, but golfing is a huge must on Grand Cayman.

Although Seven Mile Beach is probably the main attraction on Grand Cayman, smaller beaches, such as Smith Cove in South Sound, Spotts Beach in Spotts and Cemetery Beach in West Bay, offer a little more peace and quiet. Snorkeling at Smith Cove is particularly good. You should also take your snorkel and fins out to Hamburger Reef off the waterfront—its name is an indication of the various colors and formations you'll see.

Horseback riding on secluded beaches is becoming a popular activity on Grand Cayman as well as parasailing for some spectacular panoramic views of Seven Mile Beach. Tennis courts can be used on many properties for a nominal fee for nonguests. Though there is no official marina in the Cayman Islands, a yacht club is located on West Bay Road.

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## Itineraries

### Day by Day

To get a look at more than one island, we recommend the eight-day itinerary below. Veteran divers—or those wishing to avoid the busy atmosphere of Grand Cayman—may want to go straight to Little Cayman or Cayman Brac.

**Day 1**—Arrive on Grand Cayman.

**Day 2**—Do whatever appeals to you on Seven Mile Beach—parasailing, waterskiing, snorkeling, diving, kayaking, windsurfing or simply sunbathing.

**Day 3**—Rent a car and spend the day driving around the island to see some of the sights. First, head west to Hell and the Turtle Farm. Then, drive up to North Side and around the exclusive Cayman Kai neighborhood, where luxury beach houses sit side-by-side. Have lunch at the Kaibo and relax on the beach or rent a Jet Ski or kayak. Stop by the Pirate Caves in Bodden Town and see the natural blowholes. Watch the sunset from your hotel balcony. Have dinner at a restaurant of your choice. Many are within walking distance.

**Day 4**—Rise early, shop in George Town and visit the museum. Walk through the new Hero's Park in the town center, which is surrounded by the Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly and Courthouse buildings. Take an exciting Atlantis Submarine tour of Grand Cayman's underwater scenery or the nearby Nautilus semisub tour. Have lunch on the Breezes' balcony overlooking the harbor or on Paradise's patio with its view of visiting cruise ships.

**Days 5-7**—Fly to Little Cayman or Cayman Brac. Spend a day and a night on each island.

**Day 8**—Depart the Cayman Islands.

If time permits, add a few days on the third island as well.

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## Destinations in Cayman Islands

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## George Town

George Town, Grand Cayman's largest town, seems to pull off the awkward combination of modern financial center and Caribbean tourist mecca rather well. Though it boasts more than 500 banks and thousands of registered companies, this mini Switzerland operates mostly out of sight, in the air-conditioned offices of the height-restricted, seven-story buildings. More apparent are the modern and historical tourist attractions that vie for the attention of visitors, especially the thousands of cruise-ship passengers that come ashore daily. The ships are in port usually every day of the week, with the exception of some Sundays (most duty-free stores close if this is the case). When two or more ships are in harbor, expect congestion in central George Town.

You can walk around most of this town of 14,000 in two hours, even with time out for a little shopping. History buffs will enjoy the Cayman Islands National Museum, housed in the picturesque Old Courts Building on South Church Street in George Town. Built in 1830, the white clapboard structure was restored in 1990 and is now the center for research and preservation of Caymanian heritage. (The restoration won an American Express Preservation Award.) Exhibits focus on the islands' history as well as its underwater treasures and other natural features. The museum also has a gift shop and a cafe.

Pedro St. James Historic Site is located on scenic Pedro Bluff, about 5 mi/8 km east of George Town, in Savannah. Built in 1780 as a private residence (the views are spectacular), it's the oldest existing structure in the Cayman Islands. In its day, it served a number of purposes: In 1832, the island's first elected parliament met in the dining room. Later, it was a courthouse, with its ground-floor storage rooms serving as jail cells. A large renovation project has recently been completed at the site, adding a multimedia theater, a gift shop and a restaurant.

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## DINING

Caymanian dishes have many of the same ingredients you'll find throughout the Caribbean, except one dish—turtle stew. Supplied to local restaurants by the turtle farm, turtle stew is a local delicacy.

Delicious, fresh seafood is always available. Try a serving of lobster or fish complemented by breadfruit, yams, cassava, rice and peas, and other West Indian side dishes. Conch, also a local favorite, is served marinated, stewed or frittered. Finish your meal with a slice of one of the island's local heavy cakes, made from yam, pumpkin or cassava, or a hunk of rum cake. Imported wine and champagnes, as well as beers, are available at most restaurants. Stingray beer is the only beer brewed locally. Do try a cocktail made with one of the many Cayman Islands Tortuga Rum flavors.

Your dining options will depend on where you are in the Cayman Islands. Be prepared for a very limited selection of restaurants on the two smaller islands. On Cayman Brac, Captain's Table is the best on the island, featuring a diverse menu ranging from pastas and salads to steaks and hamburgers. There's also a fun bar outside to hang out at before or after dinner. Just down the road are the two main hotels on the island, Tiara Beach and Brac Reef. These also have fun outdoor bars and are open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Five minutes away is Aunt Sha's restaurant, where the menu of local dishes changes daily. On the north side, check out La Esperanza restaurant in the Watering Place district for local dishes and jerk chicken in the evening. On Little Cayman, the hotel eateries and The Hungry Iguana by the airport are about the only choices in town, serving informal buffet-style meals featuring North American and theme-night food.

But Grand Cayman—the tourism center—is one of the best places to eat in the Caribbean. The restaurants and snack bars offer everything from elegant fine dining to fast food, so there's something for every budget. You can also reduce your food expenditures by cooking for yourself if you're staying in a condominium. Grocery stores are all well stocked and you can always buy fresh fish from local anglers or in the groceries' fresh seafood sections.

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## SECURITY

### Risk Assessment

#### Overview

Cayman Islands is a generally safe destination, which is the reason its risk rating is set at 2. The islands enjoy a low rate of crime, and violence of all kinds is rare. In fact, the worst hazard you face may be a temptation to push your own limits too far, especially when engaging in watersports. On average, one U.S. visitor each month drowns or suffers cardiac arrest while diving or snorkeling in the Cayman Islands. Inexperienced divers should seek out proper instruction and consider having a physical examination before going into the depths. Resist the urge to do more than you've been trained or conditioned to do.

#### High-risk Areas



None.

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## Recent News Headlines

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[9/23/2005 7:34:00 AM - Official Travel Advice: U.K. Consular information for Cayman Islands](#)  
[9/13/2005 7:31:00 AM - Official Travel Advice: Canadian Consular information for Cayman Islands](#)  
[7/17/2005 4:00:00 AM - Belize, Cayman Islands, Grenada, Jamaica, Mexico: Update: Winds strengthen as Emily heads toward Yucatan](#)  
[7/16/2005 11:12:00 AM - Official Travel Advice: U.K. advises of temporary travel restrictions for Cayman Islands](#)  
[7/15/2005 10:02:00 PM - Official Travel Advice: U.S. warns of travel risks in Cayman Islands, Jamaica because of hurricane](#)  
[7/14/2005 7:26:00 PM - Official Travel Advice: U.S. warns approaching hurricane poses travel risk in Cayman Islands, Jamaica](#)  
[7/8/2005 2:58:00 PM - Official Travel Advice: U.S. warns its nationals of hurricane risk in Caribbean, Atlantic](#)  
[7/8/2005 6:18:00 AM - Caribbean, U.S.: Hurricane Dennis kills five in Haiti, collapses bridge; Cuba, Florida on warning](#)  
[7/7/2005 5:23:00 PM - Caribbean, U.S.: Update: Heavy rain, flooding follows hurricane as Dennis continues toward Cuba, U.S.](#)  
[7/7/2005 4:13:00 PM - Official Travel Advice: Canadians advised of hurricane warning for Caribbean islands and Florida](#)  
[7/7/2005 12:26:00 PM - Caribbean, U.S.: Hurricane Dennis forces evacuation of tourists in Florida Keys](#)  
[7/7/2005 11:56:00 AM - Caribbean: Jamaica's Kingston airport closed as hurricane approaches; warnings issued on islands in storm's path](#)  
[7/6/2005 4:22:00 PM - Official Travel Advice: Canadians advised of storm seasons in Asia, Caribbean](#)  
[1/14/2005 12:24:00 PM - Official Travel Advice: U.S. Consular information for the Cayman Islands](#)  
[12/14/2004 4:40:00 PM - Official Travel Advice: U.S. Consular information for the Cayman Islands](#)  
[9/17/2004 2:06:00 PM - Official Travel Advice: U.S. consular information for Cayman Islands](#)  
[1/23/2004 3:33:00 PM - Cayman Islands: American tourist dies while swimming](#)  
[10/13/2003 8:20:00 PM - Cayman Islands: U.S. Travel Advice: Consular information](#)  
[6/27/2003 5:19:00 PM - Cayman Islands: Flight diverted as airport closes in heavy rain](#)

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## Personal Safety

Although some petty crime exists on Grand Cayman, the Cayman Islands as a whole are among the safer destinations in the Caribbean. Following general precautions should help keep you out of trouble: Lock your car and hotel room, and keep an eye on valuables like cameras and jewelry.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

**Canadian Travel Advisory Line**—Phone: 613-944-6788. Toll-free: 800-267-6788. <http://www.voyage.gc.ca>.

**U.S. Department of State, Overseas Citizens Services**—Phone: 202-647-5225. Toll-free: 888-407-4747. <http://travel.state.gov/travel/warnings.html>.

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## Health

Food and water are safe to consume, even from street vendors, because of regular health inspections. Ask your doctor about a vaccination for hepatitis, but it's not required to enter the Cayman Islands. A bottle of household vinegar is helpful for easing the stings of jellyfish, sea urchins and other marine animals. There are mosquitoes, so take along an insect repellent containing deet. Be sure to pack sunscreen and sunglasses with UV protection, as well as aloe vera. Remember to drink plenty of water as the humidity is quite high in the summer months.

For more information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

**Health Canada**—Phone: 613-957-2991. <http://www.travelhealth.gc.ca>.

**U.S. CDC International Travel Information**—Toll-free: 877-394-8747. <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>.

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## Dos and Don'ts

Do enjoy the Cayman Islands' high-quality drinking water, but don't waste it. All the water comes from a desalinization plant—there are no natural sources of freshwater in the country.

Don't plan to sunbathe nude—it's against the law in the Cayman Islands.

Don't expect to party until dawn on a Saturday night—all bars and clubs shut down at 11:45 pm because it is illegal to sell alcohol from midnight to about noon on Sundays.

Do drive on the left.

Do brake for iguanas on Little Cayman: They have the right-of-way.

Do take a kayak out to the deserted Owen's Island in the middle of the reef on Little Cayman.

Do go to the top of the Bluff on Cayman Brac for a panoramic view of the island and the ocean.

Do contribute to the informal decor of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman by painting your name and hometown on a piece of driftwood. These homemade signs add to the charm of the small hotels.

Do visit the sister islands for a day or two.

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## HOTELS

Accommodations on Grand Cayman range from first-class hotels to apartments, condominiums and small local hotels. Most of the properties are on the leeward (sheltered from the wind) side of the island, along Seven Mile Beach. Some, such as Sunset House, cater specifically to divers. Private villas are also available for rent on Grand Cayman through an umbrella organization, Cayman Villas.

Accommodations on the two smaller islands are very limited, so don't go without a reservation. Cayman Brac has two hotels—Brac Reef Beach Resort and Divi Tiara, both of which cater to divers. There are also a few nice condos and a couple of villas and guesthouses, including Brac Caribbean Villas and the Mango Manor bed-and-breakfast. Little Cayman has three hotels—Little Cayman Beach Resort, Pirate's Point and Southern Cross Club, all of which have dive packages—plus a couple of guesthouses and villas.

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## PRACTICALITIES

### Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Citizens of Canada and the U.S. need proof of citizenship (either a passport or a certified copy of a birth certificate accompanied by photo ID), proof of sufficient funds and onward passage. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

**Capital:** George Town.

**Population:** 43,103.

**Languages:** English, Spanish (taught in schools).

**Predominant Religions:** Christian.

**Time Zone:** 5 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (-5 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

**Voltage Requirements:** 110 volts.

**Telephone Codes:** 345, country code.

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## Money

### Currency Exchange Rates

US Dollar	Cayman Islands Dollar	US Dollar	Cayman Islands Dollar
\$10	8.15	\$200	163.00

\$20	16.30	\$400	326.00
\$30	24.45	\$600	489.00
\$40	32.60	\$800	652.00
\$50	40.75	\$1000	815.00
\$60	48.90	\$1200	978.00
\$70	57.05	\$1400	1,141.00
\$80	65.20	\$1600	1,304.00
\$90	73.35	\$1800	1,467.01
\$100	81.50	\$2000	1,630.01

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## Weather

East winds and moderate temperatures make the climate pleasant year-round. Average daytime temperatures range from the mid-70s to mid-80s F/23-30 C, but do climb into the low 90s F/32-35 C on occasion during the summer months. Rain falls primarily during hurricane season (July-November); the wettest months are September-November. The best diving conditions are in the summer (warmest water, best visibility and calmest seas). No matter when you go, a light sweater may be needed in the evenings, or a waterproof windbreaker for boat trips.

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## Transportation

### Air

Owen Roberts International Airport (GCM) is 1 mi/1.6 km east of George Town on Grand Cayman. Most major international and regional airlines fly into the Cayman Islands, including Delta, American Airlines, USAIR, Air Jamaica and British Airways. Travel between islands is by Cayman Airways or Island Air. Cayman Airways has a few flights from Miami directly to Cayman Brac, but reaching Little Cayman, which has only a grass runway, requires a stop on one of the other islands.

### Bus

Small public buses (called Omni-Buses—usually small Japanese minivans) operate on Grand Cayman. There is no regular bus service on the other islands.

### Car

Rental cars are available on all three islands. Local companies don't offer any appreciable savings over rates posted by the big-name firms.

Island roads are in good repair. Local driving habits reflect the Caymanians' friendly attitude—most offer the right-of-way to tourists. Remember, driving is on the left. Getting around all three islands is pretty simple, as there is just one main road on each from one end to the other.

### Taxi

Taxis are excellent for short jaunts or full-island excursions. On the small islands, don't expect quick service: The driver may well be working another job in addition to driving a cab. Rates are fixed, but the total price will vary by the size of your group and your sightseeing plans. Agree on a price (and whether you'll be paying in U.S. or Cayman dollars) before getting in.

### Additional

Bicycles and scooters can be rented at several shops on Grand Cayman. Bicycles are available on Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. Little Cayman is the best place for easy, quiet and safe bike rides around the island.

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## For More Information

### Tourist Offices

**Cayman Islands:** Cayman Islands Tourism Office, The Pavilion, Cricket Square, Elgin Avenue, George Town, Grand Cayman (mail address: P.O. Box 67, George Town, Grand Cayman, B.W.I.). Phone 345-949-0623. Fax 345-949-4053. <http://www.caymanislands.ky>.

**Canada:** Cayman Islands Tourism Office, 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 306, Toronto, ON M4P 1K5. Phone 416-485-1550. Toll-free 800-263-5805. Fax 416-485-7578.

**U.S.:** Cayman Islands Tourism Office, Doral Center, 8300 N.W. 53rd St., Suite 103, Miami, FL 33166. Phone 305-599-9033. Fax 305-599-3766.

## Embassies of the Cayman Islands

*The Cayman Islands are represented by the U.K.*

**Canada:** British High Commission, 80 Elgin St., Ottawa, ON K1P 5K7. Phone 613-237-1530. Fax 613-237-7980. <http://www.britain-in-canada.org>.

**U.S.:** Embassy of the United Kingdom, 3100 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20008. Phone 202-588-7800. Fax 202-588-7850. <http://www.britainusa.com/consular/embassy/embassy.asp>.

## Foreign Embassies Serving the Cayman Islands

**Canada:** Canada is represented by its embassy in Jamaica: Canadian High Commission, 3 W. Kings House Road, Kingston 10, Phone 876-926-1500. Fax 876-511-3493. <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/jamaica/menu-e.asp>.

**U.S.:** The U.S. Embassy in Jamaica has consular responsibility for the Cayman Islands: U.S. Embassy, Jamaica Mutual Life Center, Third Floor, 2 Oxford Road, Kingston 5. Phone 876-929-4850. Fax 876-935-6018. There is a consular agent in Grand Cayman who can provide limited assistance. The agency is located in the offices of Adventure Travel, Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman. Phone 345-946-1611. Fax 345-945-1811.

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### Additional Reading

*Far Tortuga* by Peter Matthiessen (Random House). Written in the local patois, this eloquent novel recounts a voyage of Caymanian turtle fishermen through the Caribbean Sea.

*Reef Fish Identification: Florida, Caribbean, Bahamas* by Paul Humann and Ned Deloach (New World Publications). If you're at all curious about what you're looking at underwater, this guide is a must-have. Worth it for the pictures alone.

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### Recommended Guidebooks

*Adventure Guide to the Cayman Islands* by Paris Permenter and John Bigley (Hunter Publishing). The ultimate island discovery guide to Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, offering the nuts-and-bolts information you need, combined with all the new experiences you can enjoy in the islands.

## Cozumel, Mexico, North America

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### OVERVIEW

#### Introduction

Cozumel has long been compared to Cancun, the splashy resort just 40 mi/65 km to the north. In the past, the island of Cozumel had a laid-back, sedate atmosphere, and its superior fishing, snorkeling and diving gave it a definite edge. Today, Cozumel is still a better choice for those who don't like planned resorts, but the island is no longer an escapist's paradise. The snorkeling, diving and fishing are still great, but no one would mistake present-day Cozumel for the sleepy backwater it once was.

One reason is cruise ships: The island is a popular stop and can play host to as many as seven large ships simultaneously. When more than one ship looms on the horizon, restaurants, bars and shops fill with day-trippers. Everyone, from shopkeepers to bartenders, gets a bit stressed by the crowds.

Still, Cozumel remains a great place to visit, especially for those interested in exploring its coral reefs on scuba and snorkeling outings. The island's only town, San Miguel, has fortunately retained much of its pleasant atmosphere. Those with enough time for a day trip will find the Mayan ruins of Tulum and Chichen Itza, on the Yucatan mainland, within striking distance.

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#### History

The oldest Maya ruin on Cozumel dates to AD 300. The Maya believed that Cozumel was the spiritual home of Ixchel, the goddess of fertility and love. Maya women were said to have been obligated to make a pilgrimage to the island at least once in their lifetimes. The name Cozumel comes from the Mayan word *Cuzamil-Pectin*, which means "Land of the Swallows." (Ixchel was often depicted with swallows at her feet.)

Cozumel was a quiet place until the early 1960s, when it was first visited by underwater explorer and documentary filmmaker Jacques Cousteau. He put the island on the map as one of the great diving destinations in the world. In

recent decades, Cozumel has experienced the tourism boom that has transformed the northern Yucatan, and it has become an increasingly popular destination for cruise ships.

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## Geography

Mexico's largest island, 33 mi/53 km long and 8 mi/13 km wide, Cozumel is very flat: From the mainland, the tall hotel buildings appear to float on the horizon. Shops, restaurants and nightlife are concentrated in San Miguel, the only town, which is on the west coast of the island. Cozumel has two highways. One makes a half circle around the southern end of the island. Heading south out of San Miguel, it's a four-lane road for about 5 mi/8 km before narrowing to two lanes. The other highway is the Carretera Transversal (the cross-island highway), which is a well-maintained road that cuts straight through the jungle-covered center of the island and connects the east and west coasts.

It's hard to get lost in downtown San Miguel if you know the layout: Avenidas run north-south, and calles run east-west. Except for the large thoroughfares, such as Avenida Melgar, Calle 11 and the island highways, most roads are one-way.

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## Must See or Do

**Sights**—Deserted beaches on Cozumel's rugged east coast; sea and jungle vistas in the Punta Sur Ecological Park; the Maya ruins at San Gervasio; the Museo de la Isla de Cozumel with its haunting Maya sculptures.

**Memorable Meals**—Mexican food at El Museo accompanied by turquoise Caribbean vistas; pasta with fresh seafood in Guido's romantic courtyard; scrumptious homemade cakes and cappuccino at The Coffee Bean.

**Late Night**—Dancing to live Cuban bands at the Havana Club or Cafe Salsa; street festivities during Carnival.

**Walks**—The *malecon*, San Miguel's pretty seaside promenade; the archaeological trail and botanical gardens in Chankanaab Park.

**Especially For Kids**—Dolphin encounters and the sea lion show at Chankanaab Park.

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## Port Information

### Location

Cruise ships visiting Cozumel can stop at four locations. Some ships anchor off Cozumel's northwest coast and deliver passengers in smaller watercraft to the municipal pier that juts out from San Miguel. (Ferries also dock at this pier.) Downtown shops and restaurants are a short walk away. Larger ships dock just south of town at either the International Pier or the Puerto Maya Pier. Both piers are a short taxi ride or a 2-mi/3-km walk along the waterfront to San Miguel. Some ships are now using the new downtown pier, Punta Langosta, which is located within three blocks of San Miguel's shopping district.

A tourist-information booth on the municipal pier is open daily 8 am-2 pm and 4-6 pm. The island's main tourism office is on the second floor of the Plaza del Sol shopping center on the east side of the town plaza, half a block from the municipal pier. It's open Monday-Saturday 8:30 am-4 pm, Sunday 9 am-1 pm. Phone 869-0212.  
<http://www.islacozumel.com.mx>.

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### Shore Excursions

Consider signing up for the excursions offered by your ship. They may not be the least expensive way to see the island, but you won't have to waste your limited time making arrangements yourself—and you won't have to worry about missing the ship. Shore excursions—and their prices—vary from cruise line to cruise line. Typical tours may include visiting the Maya ruins at Tulum; outdoor adventures such as snorkeling, scuba diving, sportfishing, a Jeep safari or jungle tour on horseback; golf; or a shopping expedition to Cancun. Check with your ship's shore-excursion staff or your travel agent for additional information.

*Note:* Long trousers are best for jungle treks. Take along plenty of sunscreen and insect repellent, and don't forget to spray your ankles. A hat that shades your face from the sun is also a good idea.

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## SEE AND DO

### Sightseeing

San Miguel, the only town on the island, is a lively place. Although the typical traveler-oriented attractions are centered on the Plaza del Sol and Avenida Melgar (the waterfront road also known as the *malecon*), be sure to take a stroll through some of the streets farther inland. You'll see the houses of the town's residents and nontourist businesses

with colorful, hand-painted signs. Shop windows overflow with shoes and everyday necessities.

Another slice of Cozumel life takes place in the plaza on Sunday evenings, when the town residents (and a fair number of visitors) turn out for live concerts. Many of the locals are decked out in their finery—this is where those brightly colored shoes get put through their paces. There's dancing, courting and general merriment. It's also a great opportunity to sample homemade foods, such as tamales, that are sold by local women to raise money for their churches.

As far as formal attractions go, the most popular is Parque Nacional Chankanaab, south of San Miguel, which includes botanical gardens, a fish-filled lagoon, a beach, good snorkeling waters and activities such as swimming with dolphins. At the far southern end of the island is Punta Sur Ecological Park, a new nature preserve where visitors board tour vehicles to see the sights.

There are some Maya ruins on the island. They're small in comparison with those at Tulum or Chichen Itza, but they're worth a visit nonetheless, especially if archaeology is an interest or you're up for a jungle adventure. The best-preserved ruins are at San Gervasio, in the middle of the island, and El Cedral on the southern part of the island.

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### Landmarks and Historic Sites

#### El Cedral

This small set of ruins on the southern end of the island is visited by fewer people than San Gervasio, so you may have the place to yourself. The ancient Maya built structures there, and it later became the first Spanish settlement on the island. It's where the conquistadores led by Cortes supposedly conducted the first Catholic mass in Mexico (though Veracruz claims this honor, as well). Most of the Maya buildings that once stood at El Cedral were torn down by the Spanish, and the ruins were further damaged when the U.S. Army built an airstrip on the site during World War II. Of the Maya ruins, one small arch is all that's easily visible today. Smaller remnants are scattered in the bush around the site, but you'll need a guide and a horse to find them, both of which can be acquired near the arch. A one-room cinder-block church commemorates the first mass. El Cedral is located off the coastal road on the southern part of the island. Admission to the site is free, though you'll have to pay if you want to take a horseback tour.

#### San Gervasio

The best-preserved ruins on the island. The site is small and compact, and the temples are barely a story high. There are stelae, plazas and six structures to visit. The temple nearest the entrance once contained a steam bath for purification rituals. A few hundred yards/meters away are smaller buildings where researchers believe priests would gather with pilgrims to interpret their dreams. Don't miss the temple in this group with red handprints on the walls. (It's thought that all of the buildings were once connected by roads made of limestone.) Knowledgeable guides wait at the entrance to the site and will give you a tour for a fee. San Gervasio is about 7 mi/11 km northeast of San Miguel. Get there by taking a small paved side road off the Carretera Transversal (the cross-island highway). Daily 7 am-4 pm. Admission is US\$5.50.

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### Museums

#### Museo de la Isla de Cozumel

If you are interested in learning about the history of the region, visit this charming little museum, which is housed in what was the island's first luxury hotel. Stroll through exhibits detailing the coral-reef system around Cozumel, the early history of the Maya and the saga of piracy around the island. There are lots of other little nuggets as well, such as a display about Charles Lindbergh's 1928 visit to the island in his famous *Spirit of St. Louis* plane. The museum has a replica of a traditional Mayan house in a courtyard with an explanation by a Mayan guide of the medicinal herbs still used for healing today. Stop in for a bite to eat at the second-floor restaurant, which has stunning views of the ocean. Thursday-Sunday, the museum offers cultural programs such as concerts, traditional dance or art exhibits. Daily 9 am-5 pm. Admission runs about US\$3. Special cultural programs are free. Avenida Melgar (between Calle 4 Norte and Calle 6 Norte), Cozumel. Phone 872-1475.

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### Parks and Gardens

#### Parque Nacional Chankanaab

This park is Cozumel's prime sightseeing and activity center, and it gives a lot of bang for the buck. It was built around a saltwater lagoon where you can observe sealife, and it also has a large stretch of oceanfront (sand leading up to rock ledges along the water). You can dive and snorkel in the ocean (there are underwater statues and a fair number of fish) and swim with dolphins for an extra fee. (The dolphins there probably have the best living conditions of any in captivity in the Yucatan.) If you're traveling with small children, take them to swim in the specially protected children's lagoon where small fish are let in from the open sea. Away from the water, there's a botanical garden in which hundreds of tropical plants native to the region have been labeled. You can also follow trails past replicas of stelae and sculptures from the Olmec, Maya and Toltec cultures. Bird-watchers will find frigate birds, tanagers, woodpeckers and swallows. Keep an eye out for the park's golden iguanas—some are as long as 3 ft/1 m. A restaurant is located on the beach, as are changing areas. We recommend getting to the park early to stake out a good spot near the water. Daily 7 am-5 pm. Park admission is US\$12. Snorkeling equipment rental is US\$8. Swimming with the dolphins costs about

US\$75-\$120. Carretera Sur Km. 9 (6 mi/9 km south of San Miguel), Cozumel. Phone 872-0093.

### **Punta Sur Ecological Park**

This new national preserve at the southern tip of the island contains 247 acres/100 hectares of jungle, wetlands, lagoons and beaches. Before the park was established, this was one of the most isolated places on Cozumel, known primarily for the lighthouse that was located there. Today, cars are prohibited from entering the grounds. Instead, trucks with two-story decks are used to transport visitors through the park to view the birds and jungle vegetation and to spend time at the preserve's nice beach. Electric bikes can also be rented for US\$5 per hour if you wish to explore the park on your own. Catamaran tours to nearby Colombia Lagoon are available during the winter months, where you can do some more bird-watching and view crocodiles. (There's good bonefishing on the flats of the lagoon.) The lighthouse has been turned into a navigation museum chronicling the region's maritime history from ancient Maya times to the present. The park is off Carretera Sur (the southern coastal highway). Daily 9 am-4 pm. Park admission is US\$10 and includes a general tour of the park. The catamaran tour costs US\$20. Phone 872-0914.

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## **Recreation**

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### **Beaches**

There are three types of beaches on Cozumel. First, there are some stretches of white sand on the west side of the island, where most of the resorts and attractions are located. These beaches front mostly calm, turquoise-colored water that's good for swimming. The best of the sandy beaches are Playa Azul, Playa Pila and Playa San Juan to the north; and Playa San Francisco, Playa Sol, Mr. Sancho's, Nachi Cocom and Playa Palancar to the south.

Also on the west side of the island, you'll find "beaches" made of brown limestone, a phenomenon known as "iron shore." To get into the water, you'll usually have to use a set of steps or ladder from the shore or from a pier. Although iron shore isn't as picturesque as the white beaches, such areas are usually better for snorkeling. The waterfront at Parque Nacional Chankanaab is iron shore, but some sand has been trucked in to create a more pleasant sunning area.

On the east side of the island, facing the Caribbean Sea, there are pristine beaches of white sand that are largely deserted. They're beautiful, but the water there can be dangerous, plagued by rough surf and dangerous undertows (which is why so few people frequent the beaches). These shores can be good for lounging, but we recommend that you stay out of the water. You should also keep in mind that the east side is mostly uninhabited save for a few ramshackle but charming restaurants/beach bars.

### **Mr. Sancho's**

"Loco on the beach" is the slogan of this place, where you'll find the most complete assortment of activities in Cozumel. Lounge under a *palapa* on the beach, enjoy the seafood restaurant or participate in a brief seminar on tequila and *mezcal*. Rent a speedboat, go horseback riding, or take an ATV or motorcycle tour of the jungle. A shopping area re-creates the ambience of a colorful Mexican town, complete with locally made crafts. Daily 9 am-6 pm. Carretera Sur Km. 16, Cozumel. Phone 876-1629.

### **Nachi Cocom Beach Club**

If you want to combine sunning on a wide, white-sand beach with a good lunch and lots of activities, Nachi Cocom is the right place. The restaurant features seafood and a Mexican special with tostadas, enchiladas, quesadillas, guacamole and beans. There's a big swimming pool and a great whirlpool, and you can participate in sports and entertainment activities all day long at no charge—prizes include a free bottle of tequila and a tour on a glass-bottomed boat. Daily 9 am-5 pm. Free. Carretera Sur Km. 16.5, Cozumel. Phone 872-1811.

### **Palancar**

This wide beach lies in front of the most famous reef in Cozumel. It offers such water activities as kayaking, Jet-Skiing, sailing, snorkeling and scuba diving for beginners. A *palapa*-style restaurant in the middle of a great jungle setting serves typical Yucatan dishes and seafood. Daily 10 am-5 pm. No admission fee. Carretera Sur Km. 18, Cozumel.

### **Playa Mia Grand Beach Park**

Formerly Playa Sol, this is a lovely beach area that's ideal for swimming and snorkeling. There are underwater replicas of Maya statues to look at if you get tired of the fish. You can also rent a kayak or sailboat, have lunch at one of the restaurants and visit a small zoo. On the down side, loud music is often blasting at the beach, and there are a lot of in-your-face souvenir vendors. Daily 9 am-6 pm. US\$12 admission. Carretera Sur Km. 15.5, Cozumel. Phone 872-9030. <http://www.playamia.com>.

### **Playa San Francisco**

One of the oldest beaches in Cozumel, but with up-to-date facilities. Maya structures rim the wide, safe beach. There's a restaurant on the site with seafood and Mexican cuisine. There are plenty of watersports and beach activities, as well as a large area for sunbathing. Daily 9 am-5 pm. Carretera Sur Km. 15, Cozumel. Phone 872-0754.

## Bicycling

### Isla Bicycleta

Bicycles are an excellent way to get around Cozumel, and this well-run bike-rental shop in downtown San Miguel stands out from the rest. Rentals cost US\$7 for a half-day and US\$13 for a full day. Rates are lower for longer periods. A helmet, lock, water bottle and snorkeling gear are all included. Avenida 10 (between Rosado Salas and Calle 1 Sur), Cozumel. Phone 878-4919. <http://www.cozumelbikes.com>.

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## Boating and Sailing

Most beachfront hotels rent sailboarding equipment. Expect to pay US\$25-\$35 for up to two hours. Parasailing is also possible.

### Cozumel Sailing

Charter a sailboat, with or without crew, for a variety of excursions: sunset sails, all-day adventure sails or deep-sea fishing. Sailing lessons offered. Reservations required. Carretera Norte Km. 3 (at Puerto Abrigo Marina North), Cozumel. Phone 869-2312. <http://www.cozumelsailing.com>.

### Parasailing Ocean Tours

Offers 20-minute parasail rides where a boat pulls participants aloft in a parachute. The boats have special platforms on the back so you never get wet. Daily 9 am-sunset. US\$45. El Cozumeleno Resort, Playa Santa Pilar Km. 4.5 (just north of San Miguel), Cozumel. Phone 872-1379.

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## Fishing

Although no fishing is allowed near Cozumel's protected reefs, the waters around the island have some of the best fishing in the Caribbean, particularly at the drop-off near Playa del Carmen. Catch includes swordfish, blue and white marlin (catch-and-release only), shark, wahoo, and barracuda, depending upon the time of the year. On the flats you can catch bonefish, snook and tarpon. For a private charter, expect to pay around US\$400 for the boat for a half-day excursion, and around US\$550 for a full day. Make plans with the companies listed here, or go to the marina, Puerto Abrigo, at Carretera Norte Km. 3, and deal directly with the boat captains there.

### Albatros Charters

Offers private sportfishing charters. Phone 872-7904. Toll-free 888-333-4643. <http://www.cozumel.net/fun/albatros-charters>.

### Marathon

Private sportfishing charters. Calle 10 Norte at Calle Rafael E. Melgar, Cozumel. Phone 872-1986.

### Scuba Du

Runs private charters for up to six people (an extra fee applies for larger parties). Phone 872-9505. <http://www.scubadu.com>.

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## Golf

### Cozumel Country Club

The island moved one step up the tourism hierarchy when this course opened. The 18-hole, par-72 layout was designed by Jack Nicklaus. Greens fees for nonmembers run US\$149, including cart. Carretera Costera Norte Km. 6.5, Cozumel. Phone 872-9570. <http://www.cozumelcountryclub.com.mx>.

### Cozumel Mini-Golf

If the Jack Nicklaus-designed course at the country club is too daunting, try your skills at this miniature golf course. Owned and operated by a young couple from the U.S., it's a beautiful facility with beer, sangria and good music to accompany your golfing. US\$5. Calle 1 Sur and Avenida 15, Cozumel. Phone 872-6570.

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## Horseback Riding

### Aventuras Naturales

Offers two-hour jungle or beach tours on horseback. About US\$30 per person. Phone 872-1628. <http://www.aventurasnaturalscozumel.com>.

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## Scuba Diving and Snorkeling

Jacques Cousteau introduced the world to the underwater life of Cozumel in the 1960s, and despite some damage from overuse, the reefs that ring the island remain wonderful places to snorkel and scuba dive—some are close enough to swim to from shore. Dive shops are plentiful—the Cozumel Association of Dive Operators includes more than 100 certified dive shops, many of which operate out of the resorts.

Divers generally can expect visibility of 100 ft/30 m, but it's even better than that at Palancar Reef, at the southern end of the island. Expect to see coral of every color of the rainbow. The rest of the marine life is colorful, too: anemones, starfish, octopuses, lobster, crabs and, on a larger scale, graceful rays and dolphins. San Francisco Reef is popular for its plentiful fish, and the Santa Rosa Wall and the Colombia Pinnacles rate high for sheer excitement as well as for bountiful sea life.

Because of strong currents, Cozumel dive operators practice a style of diving known as "drift diving." Divers relax and float with the 5- to 6-knot Guiana Current, and dive-boat captains follow behind and pick up their groups at the end of the dive.

With so many fine dive operations on the island, it's a buyer's market. If you happen to be visiting in the off-season (May-early December), you can shop around once you get there. During high season, it's best to reserve in advance. You must be a certified diver and present your certification card to go diving, although some shops offer an introductory course for beginners (check locally).

The most accessible place to snorkel is the Parque Nacional Chankanaab, about 6 mi/10 km south of San Miguel. Another possibility is Airplane Flats in front of the La Ceiba Hotel, where a plane was sunk in shallow water for the filming of a movie. Snorkeling gear rents for about US\$5 a day. Another option to consider is one of the island's many snorkel tours to Palancar Gardens and Colombia Shallow Reef. Expect to pay US\$45-\$65 for a boat trip.

*Note:* Always be careful when snorkeling in Cozumel. Currents along the west side of the island can be swift, and even though most are located away from the shoreline, that's not always the case. On the east coast, the water is much rougher, with stronger currents and undertows. Never go snorkeling or diving alone.

#### **Aqua Safari**

Perfect for those who are new to diving, Aqua Safari has received many accolades for safety and expertise in working with novice divers. Expect to pay US\$45-\$60 for a two-tank dive, not including equipment rental. Avenida Melgar 429 (between Calle 5 Sur and Calle 7 Sur), Cozumel. Phone 872-0101. <http://www.aquasafari.com>.

#### **Deep Blue**

This company offers several levels of certification (PADI, TDI, IANTD). Its divers know the best reefs and use advanced equipment to find the perfect spots to dive. Rental equipment is available, too. Expect to pay US\$50-\$60 for a two-tank dive, including equipment. Avenida R. Salas 200, Cozumel. Phone 872-5653. <http://www.deepbluecozumel.com>.

#### **Dive Cozumel/Yellow Rose**

If you want to live the high life, sign on for one of the trips aboard the *Yellow Rose*, a 48-ft/15-m craft. A gourmet catered lunch is included. A three-tank dive costs US\$115. Ave. A.R. Salas 85 (between Avenida Melgor and Avenida 5), Cozumel. Phone 872-4567. <http://www.divecozumel.net>.

#### **Dive Paradise**

Offers dive training at all levels and a variety of dive trips by day or night. The company has five locations around Cozumel; you can rent or buy equipment at its main store on Avenida Melgar and at the Costa Club Resort. Two-tank dive trips from US\$58, and one-tank trips from US\$33. Avenue Rafael Melgar 602, Cozumel. Phone 872-5161. <http://www.diveparadise.com>.

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#### **Tennis and Racquet Sports**

##### **Melia Cozumel Beach Resort**

The resort's tennis courts are open to nonguests. Court fees are US\$12-\$25 an hour. Carretera Costera Norte Km. 5.8, Cozumel. Phone 872-0072.

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#### **DayTrips**

To **Chichen Itza**. One of Mexico's prize archaeological sites sits in the middle of the Yucatan Peninsula. It contains a variety of buildings built between the fifth and 13th centuries AD. Although some, and perhaps all, were the product of the Maya, some structures may have been influenced by other peoples (a point that archaeologists are still debating). Intricate, graceful stone carvings are very well-preserved, and some of the sculpture that is shaded from the sun still shows traces of color. The 79-ft-/24-m-tall pyramid-shaped Temple of Kukulcan, or El Castillo, dominates the site. From Cozumel, the most practical way to get to Chichen Itza is to take a tour that flies you to the ruins. A guided introduction to the site is usually included, and many tours also give you time to explore on your own. You can also reach the ruins by traveling overland, but it's a long trip and difficult to accomplish in a single day.

To **Tulum**. These ancient Maya ruins on the mainland were still inhabited when the first Spaniards arrived—it was said to have been larger than Seville at the time. Small compared with most archaeological sites, Tulum is the only Maya site next to the sea. The buildings don't rival Chichen Itza's in size or number—most are roped off to prevent damage

by the hordes of visitors—but the setting is spectacular. A beach at the foot of the city adds to the picture-postcard quality of the area. Don't wear your beachwear to the ruins—it is considered disrespectful. Though you can take a tour to Tulum, you can save some money by going on your own, and it's quite easy to do. Begin by taking the ferry to Playa del Carmen. Once you land, make the short walk to the ADO Bus Terminal, where you can catch a bus headed south. It will drop you off just outside the ruins. Get there early in the morning to avoid the tour-bus crowds.

To **Coba**. If you have time and feel adventurous, take the inland highway branching off 307 near Tulum and head for this mysterious Maya city, thought to have once been the commercial hub of the Maya empire in the northern Yucatan. Mostly unexcavated and covered by jungle, the site is crisscrossed with limestone-paved roads. It has some of the tallest pyramids and temples in the region. Coba is much less crowded than Tulum. Dress for hiking, and take water and insect repellent. You may want to steer clear of Coba in July and August, when temperatures can hover around 100 F/38 C.

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## Local Tours

If you are arriving in Cozumel on a cruise ship, be aware that local laws forbid independent tour operators from picking you up at the pier. You'll have to take a taxi to a rendezvous point arranged by your tour operator.

### All American People Tours

Its offerings include a look at the island's primary highlights, or more specialized outings for horseback riding or snorkeling. Excursions to Chichen Itza and Tulum are also available. Phone 872-4544.  
<http://www.cozumel.net/fun/aapt>.

### IMC Travel

Arranges a variety of tours, including around-the-island excursions, sunset cruises and outings to archaeological sites on the mainland. Air tours to Chichen Itza are offered daily. Cost is US\$186 per person plus US\$39 airport tax. Phone 872-1098. <http://www.cozumel.net/tours>.

### Turismo Aviomar

More than 10 different tours to sites in Cozumel and on the Yucatan mainland, including excursions to Chichen Itza, Tulum, Playa del Carmen and Xcaret. Jeep and horseback tours are some of the offerings. Ave. Cinco 8, Cozumel. Phone 872-5445.

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## Itineraries

### Day Plans

*To help you make the most of your time on the island, we've designed three different itineraries.*

#### PLAN A

### Beaches, Shops and Mariachis

The sun gets intense in this part of the Caribbean, so the safest time for sunning is before 11 am. First thing, grab your swimwear (and sunscreen) and head south of the cruise-ship piers to the public beach of San Francisco for swimming and lounging, or you can go to Parque Nacional Chankanaab for snorkeling or swimming with dolphins. Both places have restaurants, too, so you can spend the day if that's your desire.

When you've had enough sun and surf, change back into street clothes and catch a taxi to downtown San Miguel. Have lunch at one of the waterfront restaurants such as Palmeras. Then shop as you stroll through the many small streets that fan out from the plaza. Save some time for the air-conditioned Museo de la Isla de Cozumel, whose exhibits cover the fascinating history of the island. Or if you'd like to take home some Mexican clay pots and Yucatecan spices, go inland to the *mercado* (Avenida 25 and Rosado Salas), where locals shop for fresh produce. Another place for good bargains is the flea market, where you'll find arts and crafts from all over Mexico: pottery, silver, black coral, clothing and more.

In the evening, take a taxi to the hotel of your choice for dinner and the evening's entertainment. Many of the hotels have dinner shows with dancing and mariachis (check locally). If you still have energy, stop for a drink, live music and dancing at rowdy Carlos 'n' Charlie's; for a more sophisticated nightcap, try the Havana Club. Then, dance the night away to salsa, merengue and Latin rhythms at Cafe Salsa or La Pura Vida.

#### PLAN B

### Waterworld

Some of the best views in Cozumel are underwater. If you like to snorkel, head to Parque Nacional Chankanaab, about 10 minutes from downtown San Miguel by taxi. You can view brightly colored fish and coral, as well as swim and play with dolphins (for an additional fee). The park also has lovely botanical gardens. After you've lazed on the beach awhile, you can walk to La Laguna, a huge thatched *palapa* on the bayfront, where you can buy sandwiches, hamburgers and seafood.

If you are a serious diver, you'll want to arrange a half- or full-day dive trip. Cozumel has the second-largest coral-reef network in the world and an international reputation as a scuba-diving paradise. Experts and first-time divers alike will be impressed by the coral reefs and their surrounding abundant life. The outstanding visibility makes it easy to explore the 20 mi/32 km of reef and limestone caves and tunnels located about the island. One of our favorite dives is the Santa Rosa Wall. If you're a novice, Santa Rosa offers a shallow dive among coral formations, nurse sharks, rays and sea turtles. If you're planning a trip during high season (mid December-late April), it's a good idea to contact a dive operator in advance. In the off-season, you can shop around once you get there. After you've emerged from the water, return to town for dinner and to enjoy mariachis.

## PLAN C

### Flora, Fauna and Ruins

Cozumel is covered with short, rather scrubby jungle that contains intriguing flora and offers opportunities to see iguanas, coatis, exotic birds and crocodiles. To appreciate the island's natural beauty, rent a car for the day and head south to Parque Nacional Chankanaab. Hundreds of native plants have been labeled in the botanical gardens that surround the park's saltwater lagoon. Watch, too, for birds and animals that make the gardens their home. (Bird-watchers and nature lovers shouldn't miss the gardens.) If you get hungry, pick up a quick lunch at the park.

If you can wait awhile to eat, return to the highway and continue south past Playa San Francisco and around the southern end of the island. Then follow the highway up the eastern side, stopping to enjoy the rugged vistas and watch turbulent waves lash the rocks. Lovely Playa Bonita is a great place for a stop. If you need some refreshment, several waterfront bars/restaurants are found along the road. Return to the car and take the cross-island highway to the turnoff for the ruins of San Gervasio. If you don't hire a guide, you can see the ruins in less than half an hour. From there, return to San Miguel.

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## DINING

Most restaurants in Cozumel are informal—"comfortably casual," and jackets are almost never required. There is a wide range of prices. Seafood and Yucatecan cuisine—one of the spiciest in Mexico—are specialties of the region. Be careful of the habanero-pepper sauce, which is served on the side—it's made from the hottest pepper in the world. Prices in Cozumel's restaurants tend to be higher than those in Playa del Carmen on the mainland.

Expect to pay within these guidelines for a meal for one, not including drinks, tax or tip: \$ = less than US\$10; \$\$ = US\$10-\$20; \$\$\$ = US\$21-\$50; and \$\$\$\$ = more than US\$50.

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## Favorites

### El Museo

This open-air restaurant is great for enjoying sea breezes and people-watching. It's on the top floor of the local museum. The food is good—not great—but the view makes it all worthwhile. You can see all the way across the Yucatan Channel to Playa del Carmen. Daily for breakfast and lunch. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards. Avenida Melgar and Calle 6, Cozumel. Phone 872-0838.

### Guido's

This cozy restaurant is the best place on Cozumel for pizza and pasta. Try the *caprese* salad and fettuccine Alfredo with shrimp and mushrooms. The tree-shaded outdoor patio is especially pleasant. Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Avenida Melgar (between Calles 6 and 8), Cozumel. Phone 872-0946.

### Las Palmeras

The oldest restaurant in Cozumel, located a few steps from the main pier overlooking the ocean and close to the main plaza of Cozumel. Decorated with the palm trees of its name, it captures the quality of the island. It's a good place for a relaxed lunch, or just a cup of coffee or a cold beer. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Avenida Melgar and Avenida Juarez, Cozumel. Phone 872-0532.

### Pancho's Backyard

Located in a courtyard in the prettiest store in town, Los Cinco Soles, this restaurant gets our vote for the most romantic dining spot on the island. Its quiet patio setting and the sounds of trickling water in the fountains only add to the atmosphere. Service is excellent, and the food is always good (though seldom great). Daily for dinner only. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Avenida Melgar and Calle 6 Norte, Cozumel. Phone 872-2141.

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## Local and Regional

### El Museo

This open-air restaurant is great for enjoying sea breezes and people-watching. It's on the top floor of the local museum. The food is good—not great—but the view makes it all worthwhile. You can see all the way across the Yucatan Channel to Playa del Carmen. Daily for breakfast and lunch. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards. Avenida Melgar and Calle 6, Cozumel. Phone 872-0838.

### Ernesto's Fajitas

If you're searching for the perfect fajita, try Ernesto's. The achiote-flavored meats are delicious, and the restaurant's big papier-mache figures and friendly cats make for a fun atmosphere. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Next to the Sol Caribe Hotel (near the International Pier), Cozumel. Phone 872-5130.

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## Coffeehouses

### The Coffee Bean

Located just off San Miguel's main shopping drag, this modern coffee shop is a perfect place for an afternoon rest stop. There are huge slices of homemade cake, quiches and bagels to go along with the freshly brewed coffee and espresso creations. No phone. Daily 7 am-11 pm. \$. No credit cards. Calle 3 Sur (near Avenida Melgar), Cozumel.

### Coffeelia

Hang out with Cozumel's bohemian set at this funky coffee shop and restaurant. Espresso drinks, light lunches and tasty breakfasts are served. The menu also features a good selection of vegetarian dishes. Daily 7:30 am-11 pm. \$. No credit cards. Calle 5 Sur (between Avenidas Melgar and 5 Sur), Cozumel. Phone 872-7402.

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## Seafood

### El Capi Navegante

Arguably the best seafood restaurant on Cozumel. Very fresh fish, beautifully presented. You can even try octopus in its own ink. Mariachis perform in the evenings. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Avenida 10 (between Calles 3 and 5 Sur), Cozumel. Phone 872-1730.

### Lobster House

This charming restaurant north of town is one of our favorites for its lovely setting—above a marsh that is home to ducks and turtles. The menu is simple: lobster, bread, steamed veggies and garlic rice. Select the lobster tail you want—the price is determined by its weight. Daily for dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Carretera Costera Norte Km. 4 (across from the Playa Azul Resort, north of San Miguel), Cozumel. Phone 872-0795.

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## Steak Houses

### Pepe's Grill

The name may not sound elegant, but this place on the waterfront will surprise you: Waiters in tuxedos serve steaks, seafood and Mexican dishes. Prime rib is the house specialty. The drinks are generous, the music is lively, and the food is excellent. Sit on the upstairs balcony for a magnificent view of the Caribbean. Daily for dinner only. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Avenida Melgar and Calle Salas, Cozumel. Phone 872-0213.

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## Other Options

### Panaderia Zermatt

It's tough to beat this family-run Mexican bakery for value and delicious pastries and muffins. They also serve juices and coffee. The small outdoor patio is a great spot for an impromptu breakfast before heading off to explore the island. Monday-Saturday 7 am-8:30 pm, Sunday 7 am-3 pm. \$. No credit cards. Avenida 5 (corner of Calle 4 Norte), Cozumel.

Phone 872-1384.

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## ENTERTAINMENT

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### Nightlife

San Miguel's nightlife is centered downtown—San Miguel has more than 100 different restaurants, nightspots, bars and discos—but the resort hotels also frequently offer musical entertainment at dinner. Favorite discos are Neptuno (Avenida Melgar and Calle 11 Sur, on the southern end of the *malecon*) and Senor Frog (Avenida Melgar and Calle 7, opposite the Punta Langosta pier). Carlos 'n' Charlie's has music, dancing, zany antics by the waiters and lots of noise (Ave. Melgar 2-A).

If you like jazz and salsa, you won't want to miss the late-night scene at Cafe Salsa (Avenida 10 and Avenida Juarez) or La Pura Vida (Calle 10 and Calle Rosado Salas). Or check out the Havana Club on Avenida Melgar for live Cuban bands.

Depending on the time of year, some of the resort hotels have folkloric programs with dancing and mariachis (check locally). And don't forget about Sunday nights in Plaza del Sol, where there are often free concerts with impromptu dancing in the square.

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## SHOPPING

A favorite pastime of nearly every visitor to Cozumel is shopping, and for good reason. Prices for most crafts are quite high, but you'll find good buys on a wide variety of items: woven hammocks, leather purses and sandals, cotton clothing, ceramics, silver and gold jewelry, onyx, and liquor. You can also find bargains on Mexican handicrafts such as brightly colored baskets, papier-mache figures and wood carvings. The main shopping district surrounds the plaza and spreads out north and south along Avenida Melgar—the *malecon*, and the flea market located at Calle 1 Sur, near the main plaza.

Almost all stores accept U.S. dollars as well as pesos. Often you'll find prices marked in both currencies—and sometimes only in U.S. dollars. Most major credit cards are readily accepted. (You often can get a better price if you offer cash—U.S. dollars or pesos—instead of credit cards.)

Do be prepared to bargain. In fact, it's expected in most markets and street stalls (though not in upscale boutiques). A good way to start is to offer half of what is asked. Then both negotiators work toward the middle. But don't bargain for something unless you really want it: It's considered rude not to buy after your price has been accepted.

**Shopping Hours:** Generally Monday-Saturday, 9 am-9:30 pm. Some stores away from the main tourist areas close for siesta during the midafternoon.

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## Bookstores

### Libreria del Parque

The music can be a bit loud for comfortable browsing, but this store on the main plaza stocks a surprisingly good selection of international magazines and books about Mexican history and archaeology. It's a good place to find guidebooks to Tulum, Coba and Chichen Itza. Monday-Friday 9am-10 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-1 pm and 6 pm-10 pm. (Next to the Plaza del Sol on the main square). Phone 872-0031.

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## Markets

### El Mercado

This is the island's food market, where you can buy local spices as well as Mexican pottery. You'll see plenty of Cuban cigars being sold, too, but be aware that they cannot be legally brought back to the U.S. The market is open daily 6 am-3 pm. Calle Salas (between Avenidas 20 and 25), Cozumel.

### Plaza del Sol

This shopping center has two floors of crafts and jewelry. The merchandise includes items from all over Mexico. It opens onto a patio surrounded by shops selling silver and ceramics. Nearby is one of the world's most upscale jewelers, Van Cleef & Arpels. On the east side of Plaza del Sol (the main square in San Miguel), Cozumel.

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## Specialty Stores

### Bugambillas

The best place to buy handmade children's clothing, gorgeous embroidered tablecloths and lace. Monday-Saturday

9:30 am-3 pm and 6 pm-9:30 pm. Avenida 10 Sur (between Calle Salas and Calle 1 Sur, one block from the waterfront), Cozumel. Phone 872-6282.

#### Los Cinco Soles

One of the oldest luxury stores in town, Los Cinco Soles occupies an entire block along the *malecon*, north of the ferry pier. It sells everything from Talavera pottery, jewelry, clothing and handblown glass to Mexican furniture and liquor. Monday-Saturday 8 am-9 pm, Sunday 9 am-5 pm. Ave. Melgar Norte 27, Cozumel. Phone 872-0132. <http://www.loscincosoles.com>.

#### Pama

This store specializes in high-quality jewelry, perfumes and watches. Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-9:30 pm. Ave. Melgar Sur 9, Cozumel. Phone 872-0090.

#### Pax—La Casa de La Musica

This unique store has a remarkable collection of musical instruments from all over Mexico, as well as some from Central and South America. The shop also carries a selection of beautiful wood carvings and other unusual handicrafts. Monday-Saturday, 9 am-6 pm. Avenida 15 and Benito Juarez, Cozumel. Phone 872-5269. <http://www.islacozumel.net/services/pax>.

#### Tucan

Sells Mexican Talavera pottery, blown glassware and items made of pewter. Monday-Saturday 8:30 am-8 pm. Avenida Melgar and Calle 8 Norte, Cozumel. Phone 872-1586.

#### Viva Mexico

A good spot for handicrafts from all over the country, plus an array of standard T-shirts and Mexican blankets. Daily 8 am-8 pm. Avenida Melgar and Calle Salas, Cozumel. Phone 872-5466.

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## SECURITY

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### Personal Safety

Cozumel is among the safer islands in the Caribbean, but you should still use commonsense precautions. Don't leave your belongings unattended at the beach or visible in a parked rental car, and don't walk along deserted beaches in the evening. This is especially true on the less-populated east side of the island. (There are sometimes military patrols in the area watching for drug smugglers.) There are police patrols, including English-speaking tourism police, along the *malecon* and at the beaches.

Tourists are not generally the target of crime, and driving around the city is generally safe. However, it is a good idea to take a taxi to your hotel at night. If you rent a car, it's best not to leave it parked on the street overnight.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

**Canadian Travel Advisory Line**—Phone: 613-944-6788. Toll-free: 800-267-6788. <http://www.voyage.gc.ca>.

**U.S. Department of State, Overseas Citizens Services**—Phone: 202-647-5225. Toll-free: 888-407-4747. <http://travel.state.gov/travel/warnings.html>.

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### Health

The water is almost always safe in the major hotels—they usually have purification plants—but ask first to make sure the water is *agua purificada* (purified water). Bottled water is widely available. It's a good idea to avoid food from street vendors and to stick with the clean-looking restaurants that draw a lot of customers. Ask your doctor about hepatitis vaccinations before your trip.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

**Health Canada**—Phone: 613-957-2991. <http://www.travelhealth.gc.ca>.

**U.S. CDC International Travel Information**—Toll-free: 877-394-8747. <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>.

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### Dos and Don'ts

Do greet everyone with a *buenos dias* (before noon), *buenas tardes* (noon to 7 pm) or *buenas noches* (after 7 pm). Mexicans value this practice and will always extend a greeting, even to strangers, before getting down to business.

Do know that prices may be quoted in pesos and/or U.S. dollars. (Pesos are marked M\$.) Although dollars are often accepted, you can't always be certain. In general, you'll get the best rate if you pay in the denomination marked on the item.

Don't walk out of a bar or cantina with a bottle of beer. Most beer bottles have deposits paid for by the establishment, so the staff keeps a close eye on them. (If you want to take the beverage with you, ask for a plastic cup.)

Do get away from the tourist areas and explore San Miguel's funky back streets with their colorful houses and typical Mexican street life.

Don't enter churches wearing shorts or beach clothing.

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## HOTELS

Accommodations in Cozumel range from first-class properties to budget hotels. Many hotels offer air-and-hotel packages that bring down costs significantly. Honeymooners and scuba divers should check for special packages, as well.

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### City

#### Cozumel Palace

Ave Rafael E Melgar, Km 1.5 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-9430 FAX: (52)987/872-9431  
<http://www.palaceresorts.com>

#### El Cid La Ceiba Beach Hotel

Paradise Point 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-0844 FAX: (52)987/872-0065  
<http://www.mexicoweb.com/sombrero>

#### Fiesta Americana Cozumel Dive Resort

Carretera A Chankanaab, Km 7.5 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-2622 FAX: (52)987/872-2666  
[dive@fiestaamericana.com.mx](mailto:dive@fiestaamericana.com.mx) <http://www.fiestamericana.com>

#### Fontan Cozumel Dive Resort

Carretera Playa San Juan, Km 2.5 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-0300 FAX: (52)987/872-0105

#### Hotel Casa del Mar

Costera Sur Km 4 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-1900 FAX: (52)987/872-1855  
[sales@casadelmarcozumel.com](mailto:sales@casadelmarcozumel.com) <http://www.casadelmarcozumel.com>

#### Hotel Cozumel

Costera Sur Km 1.7 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-2900 FAX: (52)987/872-2154  
[reserv@hotelcozumel.com.mx](mailto:reserv@hotelcozumel.com.mx) <http://www.hotelcozumel.com.mx>

#### Iberostar Cozumel Resort

Costera Sur, km. 17,785 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-9900 FAX: (52)987/872-9906  
[rrppczm@iberostar.com.mx](mailto:rrppczm@iberostar.com.mx) <http://www.iberostar-cozumel.com>

#### Melia Cozumel Beach & Golf Resort

Carretera Costera Norte Km 5.8 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-9870 FAX: (52)987/872-9882  
[melia.cozumel@solmelia.com](mailto:melia.cozumel@solmelia.com) <http://www.meliacozumel.solmelia.com/>

#### Occidental Grand Cozumel

Kilometro 17.5, Carretera Sur Cozumel 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-9730 FAX: (52)987/872-9745  
[reservations.cozumel@mx.occidentalhotels.com](mailto:reservations.cozumel@mx.occidentalhotels.com) <http://www.grandcozumel.com>

#### Park Royal Cozumel

Playa Paraiso Km 3.5 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-0700 FAX: (52)987/872-1301  
<http://www.parkroyalhotels.com.mx>

**Presidente InterContinental Cozumel**

Carr A Chankanaab KM 6.5 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-9500 FAX: (52)987/872-9501  
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**Sol Cabanas del Caribe**

Carretera Costera Norte km 5.1 77600 TEL: (52)987/872-0017 FAX: (52)987/872-1599  
<http://www.solmelia.es>

## PRACTICALITIES

### Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Australian and U.K. citizens need passports. Canadian and U.S. citizens need proof of citizenship—either a passport or a certified copy of a birth certificate accompanied by photo ID. We recommend a passport. All visitors must fill out a tourist card. The Mexican government charges a tourism tax of about US\$20 for all visitors except cruise-ship passengers and a departure tax of US\$25, though both are usually included in the price of your airline ticket. A yellow-fever certificate is required if you're arriving from an infected area (contact health authorities for the latest information). Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

**Population:** 75,000.

**Languages:** Spanish is the main language, but English is widely spoken. Maya is spoken by a few people.

**Predominant Religions:** Christian (Roman Catholic).

**Time Zone:** 6 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (-6 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the first Sunday in April until the last Sunday in October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 110 volts.

**Telephone Codes:** 52, country code for Mexico; 987, area code for Cozumel.

### Money

#### Currency Exchange

U.S. dollars are widely accepted on Cozumel. In fact, most ATMs give both U.S. dollars and Mexican pesos. ATMs are readily available, and most are located within a block of Plaza del Sol in San Miguel. However, it is possible to pay for purchases in Mexican pesos, and if you visit less-traveled areas on the mainland, you will find pesos to be more commonly used than U.S. dollars. San Miguel has a number of privately run exchange booths, or *casas de cambio*, which will change U.S. and Canadian dollars or traveler's checks to pesos at rates only slightly lower than the banks' rates. *Casas de cambio* keep longer hours than banks and are often more convenient to use.

### Currency Exchange Rates

US Dollar	Mexican Peso (MXN)	US Dollar	Mexican Peso (MXN)
\$10	114.55	\$200	2,291.03
\$20	229.10	\$400	4,582.05
\$30	343.65	\$600	6,873.08
\$40	458.21	\$800	9,164.11
\$50	572.76	\$1000	11,455.13
\$60	687.31	\$1200	13,746.16
\$70	801.86	\$1400	16,037.19
\$80	916.41	\$1600	18,328.21
\$90	1,030.96	\$1800	20,619.24
\$100	1,145.51	\$2000	22,910.27

#### Tipping

A tip of 10%-15% is expected at most restaurants. Taxi drivers usually don't expect a tip.

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## Weather

Expect daytime high temperatures in the 80s F/20s C almost year-round on the Yucatan Peninsula. The humidity will be higher in the summer months, but breezes off the sea will help to keep you cool. Hurricane season is June-November, which is when rain is most likely.

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## What to Wear

Casual summer clothing is appropriate year-round, but swimsuits are worn only on the beaches or at hotel swimming pools. Men are rarely, if ever, required to wear jackets. Shorts and sandals are acceptable for fast-food places, but they are not considered appropriate for the nicer restaurants.

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## Communication

### Telephone

The best option for long-distance calls is to buy a phone card sold at pharmacies, hotel gift shops and at newsstands. They cost about US\$3 for 12 minutes or about US\$5 for 20 minutes. Phones that allow you to use the card are found in some hotels and at street corners downtown. International calls can also be made and faxes sent from the Calling Station on Avenida Melgar at Calle 3 Sur. Long-distance direct service and fax services are available at some hotels, but expect to pay a lot to use them.

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### Internet Access

More than 40 shops offering Internet access are located in downtown San Miguel and near the Punta Langosta cruise-ship terminal.

### Net and Phone Center

This friendly Internet cafe close to the Punta Langosta cruise-ship terminal boasts up-to-date equipment and fast connections. Internet access is free if you make an international telephone call. Daily 9 am-7 pm. About US\$2 an hour. Avenida Melgar (between Calles 7 and 11), Cozumel. Phone 869-2265.

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## Mail and Package Services

### Post Office

The main post office on Cozumel. Don't expect speedy service. Monday-Friday 9 am-6 pm, Saturday 9 am-noon. Calle 7 Sur and Avenida Rafael Melgar, Cozumel.

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## Transportation

### Air

Several major airlines and some international flights serve Cozumel International Airport (CZM), which is 2 mi/3 km northeast of San Miguel's center. It's served by international flights from the U.S. and also by shuttle flights to and from Cancun and other Mexican destinations. Taxis provide transportation to and from the airport.

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### Car

Unless you plan to do a lot of exploring around the island, you won't need to rent a car for your entire stay. Do so only when you're ready to experience the isolated east side. Rental cars are available downtown, at major hotels and at the airport. Drivers must have a valid license and be at least 21 years old. Daily rates begin at about US\$30. Mexican insurance is about US\$15 extra per day. If your credit card provides collision and theft insurance, make sure that the coverage is valid in Mexico. Driving is on the right, and be aware that streets and roads are narrow and sometimes rough. Insurance generally does not cover you if you drive the vehicle on a dirt road and get stuck.

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### Ferry

The Cozumel-Playa del Carmen Ferry is a convenient and inexpensive way to get to the Mexican mainland. There is also a car ferry that operates between Cozumel and Punta Venado. You can take a rental car over and drive to Tulum, Chichen Itza, Coba and other places on the mainland.

### Cozumel-Playa del Carmen Ferry

Passenger-only ferry service between Cozumel and Playa del Carmen, on the mainland. Note that the water can be rough: Having something to combat seasickness is a good idea. The ferries dock at the municipal pier on the waterfront in San Miguel. Boats generally operate between 5 am and 10 pm, leaving once an hour in the peak morning and afternoon travel times, less frequently in off-peak periods. Check the schedule at the pier before making your plans—times change frequently. The passage takes about 35 minutes. Fare is US\$8 one-way. Tickets can be purchased at the ferry dock.

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### Taxi

Taxis are always at hand in San Miguel, at the piers, at the major hotels, at the airport and cruising the downtown streets. For short trips, they operate on a set-fare system, so negotiating is not necessary. It's always a good idea to ask about the fare before getting into the cab, however. Say "*Cuanto cuesta un viaje a*" (followed by your destination). The driver should present a fare card and show you the rate. If you want to go farther afield or charter the taxi for several hours, you can bargain with the driver. Taxi tours of the island (for up to four people) cost about US\$50-\$60 for four hours.

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### Additional

Scooters and mopeds can be rented from vendors along the *malecon* and the side streets leading east. Expect to pay about US\$25 a day. Mexican law requires the use of a helmet. This mode of travel can be particularly dangerous because of road conditions and careless drivers. Be careful and use plenty of sunscreen to protect exposed skin.

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## For More Information

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### Tourist Offices

#### Cozumel Tourist Office

Monday-Friday 8:30 am-5 pm. Plaza del Sol Building (on the east side of the main plaza), Cozumel. Phone 869-0212. <http://islacozumel.com.mx>.

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## CALENDAR

Cozumel's yearly celebrations begin with the Carnival season. Preliminary events begin as early as January and reach their peak during the week preceding Ash Wednesday (in February or March), with exciting parades down the *malecon* on Saturday, Sunday and Fat Tuesday.

During the remainder of the year, the island's most distinctive celebrations are named after Catholic saints. In early May, the Fiesta de Santa Cruz commemorates the discovery of Cozumel. Bullfights, rides, a craft show and other activities take place. The festival of San Pedro y San Pablo (Saints Peter and Paul) occurs on 29 June, when participants can enjoy fair rides, food vendors, handicraft stalls and more.

The Fiesta de San Miguel on 29 September celebrates the town's patron saint, San Miguel. A statue of the saint is taken from its resting place and carried by a caravan of decorated boats to the north end of the island, where flower garlands are tossed into the sea in remembrance of lost sailors. There's a public dance held in the evening at Plaza del Sol.

For more information about upcoming events in Cozumel, visit <http://www.islacozumel.com.mx>.

To call any of the phone numbers listed in this calendar from outside Mexico, you must first dial your country's international access code, followed by Mexico's country code, 52.

Information in this calendar is subject to change and should be confirmed.

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### September, 2005

**15, 16 Sep—Día de la Independencia.** Public holiday. Cries of "Viva Mexico!" are heard throughout the city. Fireworks, traditional dance performances, food and music fill the days, and a parade processes through downtown. A fair is held near City Hall.

**21-29 Sep—Fiestas de San Miguel Arcangel.** Religious festival honoring the island's patron saint. Parades, craft fairs and food vendors fill the streets. Residents don traditional Maya dress, and fishermen carry an image of San Miguel Arcangel to the sea.

**4, 11, 18, 25 Sep—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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### October, 2005

**2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Oct—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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### November, 2005

**1 Nov—Dia de Todos los Santos.** All Saints' Day, a public and religious holiday. Most offices and businesses are closed. Families honor their departed loved ones with elaborate altars in their homes.

**1, 2 Nov—Dia de los Muertos.** During this festive holiday, residents construct altars to honor the dead and place offerings on graves. Bakeries make skull-shaped sweets and *pan de muerto*, the "bread of the dead."

**6, 13, 20, 27 Nov—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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## December, 2005

**1-12 Dec—Dia de la Virgen de Guadalupe.** An islandwide celebration of the revered Virgin of Guadalupe. A pilgrimage processes to the Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe, where a number of masses are held. Also a race, and a festival featuring foods, music and dance.

**25 Dec—Dia de Navidad.** Public holiday. Families usually celebrate Christmas at home.

**4, 11, 18, 25 Dec—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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## January, 2006

**1 Jan—New Year's Day.** Public holiday.

**1, 8, 15, 22, 29 Jan—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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## February, 2006

**5, 12, 19, 26 Feb—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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## March, 2006

**21 Mar—Birthday of Benito Juarez.** Public holiday honoring the leader of the Mexican Revolution.

**5, 12, 19, 26 Mar—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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## April, 2006

**2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Apr—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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## May, 2006

**1 May—Labor Day.** Public holiday.

**5 May—Cinco de Mayo.** Public holiday.

**10 May—Dia de la Madre.** Many businesses close for this celebration of Mother's Day.

**7, 14, 21, 28 May—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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## June, 2006

**4, 11, 18, 25 Jun—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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## July, 2006

**2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Jul—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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## August, 2006

**15 Aug—Feast of the Assumption.** Religious holiday. Services are held nationwide.

**6, 13, 20, 27 Aug—Sunday Fiesta.** A free, open-air event featuring live music by local bands. Plaza Central, Parque de Benito Juarez, San Miguel.

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## Key West, Florida, United States, North America

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### OVERVIEW

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#### Introduction

Ernest Hemingway, Harry Truman and Jimmy Buffett. An unlikely trio under most circumstances. But the author, U.S. president and singer all had a common bond—an inability to resist the lure of a small island 90 mi/145 km north of Cuba.

It's little wonder that Key West has been a haven for the famous—and for the nonfamous, too. Everyone seems to enjoy the relaxed pace, the storybook architecture, the colorful history, the live-and-let-live local attitude and the end-of-the-world feel. The natural surroundings are just as pleasant: Hibiscus, bougainvillea and other flora and fauna give the island a tropical feel and smell. And when the sun begins to set each day, there's cause for celebration as street performers and arts-and-crafts vendors participate in the waterfront activities.

You can venture off the island for snorkeling, diving or fishing. Or you can just walk around Old Town and soak up the mix of flavors, including hints of Cuba and Old Florida. But no matter how you spend your time, expect to be part of a crowd because Key West draws droves of people.

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#### History

The U.S. government acquired Key West from Spain in the early 1800s. Back in those days, pirates were active in the area. After the U.S. Navy put them out of business, most of the isolated islanders made their living as wreckers, salvaging the booty from ships that wrecked on the coral reefs offshore. That business waned in the mid-1800s after the government built lighthouses. So the economy turned to shrimping, fishing, sponging and cigar making—with the help of Cuban dissidents who had fled their island and Spanish rule. During the Spanish-American War and World War I, major military installations were built on Key West. But in the 1920s, much of the local economic base began to fade as the military left and as the cigar industry moved northward to Tampa.

After the Depression, the city began to bill itself as a tourist destination, advertising its weather, architecture and lifestyle. Artists and writers flocked there, most notably Tennessee Williams, Elizabeth Bishop and, of course, Ernest Hemingway. Today, tourism remains the mainstay of the local economy—each year this city of slightly more than 25,000 permanent residents draws hundreds of thousands of visitors, who arrive by plane, car and cruise ship.

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#### Geography

The tiny island (2 mi/3 km wide by 4 mi/6 km long) is one of about a thousand coral islets in the Florida Keys, an archipelago that stretches 126 mi/203 km southward from the tip of mainland Florida. It is linked to the rest of the state by U.S. Highway 1, which is known as the Overseas Highway (it spans the East Coast and straddles the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean in the Keys). The roadway ribbons its way across 34 of the islands that form the Florida Keys (and over 42 bridges that unite them).

Because Key West is small and a snap to navigate, you can easily explore most of it on foot (or, better yet, on bicycle). The main sights are concentrated in Old Town, on the western side of the island. Duval Street is the main thoroughfare, packed with bars, souvenir shops and bed-and-breakfasts. Off of Duval, Old Town's streets are lined with picket fences and Victorian-era frame houses decorated with gingerbread trim.

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#### Must See or Do

**Sights**—Spectacular sunsets and the street performers at Mallory Square; Key West's Historic Harborwalk.

**Museums**—Ernest Hemingway Home & Museum; Mel Fisher Museum.

**Memorable Meals**—Eating alongside chickens and roosters at Blue Heaven; sampling Bahamian conch chowder at Bahama Mama's; seafood along the harbor at Alonzo's.

**Late Night**—The Green Parrot, one of Key West's oldest bars; Sloppy Joe's, Hemingway's favorite hangout, followed by a second round at the bar's original location, now Captain Tony's; dancing at Rick's.

**Walks**—Strolling through Key West Cemetery and reading the sometimes off-the-wall crypt inscriptions; Art Walks coordinated by galleries on specific evenings during the month; walk the beach to Southernmost Point.

**Especially For Kids**—Key West Aquarium; Turtle Kraals Museum; the Key West Butterfly and Nature Conservatory.

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## Port Information

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### Location

Cruise ships tie up at either Mallory Square or the Truman Annex on Thomas Street (also known as the Outer Mole). Both are on the west end of the island, and both are within walking distance of Old Town—the concentration of streets with most of the restaurants, shops, bars and sights.

The Chamber of Commerce office at Mallory Square has brochures for self-guided walking and biking tours that focus on a variety of subjects, including famous writers, architecture and museums.

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### Shore Excursions

Consider signing up for the excursions offered by your ship. They may not be the least expensive way to see the island, but you won't have to waste your limited time making arrangements yourself—and you won't have to worry about missing the ship. Typical tours include a trolley tour of the town or exploring the area by bicycle. On the water, go sailing, snorkeling or kayaking, explore the deep from a glass-bottom boat, go deep-sea fishing for sailfish or dolphin (mahimahi) or flats fishing for bonefish or tarpon. Check with your ship's shore-excursion director or your travel agent for additional information.

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## Potpourri

The gumbo limbo, a common Key West shade tree, is also known as the "tourist tree" because its bark is always red and peeling.

Pick up one of the city's best freebies, Sharon Wells' *Walking and Biking Guide to Historical Key West*. It's available in stores, hotels and restaurants all over town and contains 10 self-guided tours with maps and photographs.

What exactly is a conch (pronounced *konk*)? First of all, it's a marine mollusk that is served as seafood, especially in the form of those Key West favorites: conch fritters and conch chowder. Anybody born on the island is also considered a conch, and non-natives who live there for at least seven years are known as freshwater conchs. You'll no doubt become familiar with Key West's nickname—the Conch Republic.

The original Spanish name for Key West was Cayo Hueso ("island of bones")—a reference to the scattered bones early explorers discovered on the island.

Key West has no natural source of freshwater, except for rain. So the island's water is piped more 100 mi/160 km through an aqueduct from Homestead, Florida.

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## SEE AND DO

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### Sightseeing

Key West is so small that you'll need little more than a comfortable pair of walking shoes (or perhaps a bike) to soak up most everything the city has to offer. To start out, you may want to get the lay of the land by hopping on the Conch Tour Train or the Old Town Trolley—both will take you past virtually every point of interest on the island. (The Conch Train is nonstop, and the Trolley has nine hop-on/hop-off points.)

Most of the sights are located in Old Town, where you'll find gingerbreaded Victorian houses and charming bed-and-breakfasts commingling with packed bars and countless souvenir shops. The main drag is Duval Street, which is crammed with restaurants, galleries and shops. Duval is a good landmark to use to figure out where you are and where you're going. The southeastern end of the street is near the Southernmost Point (a requisite photo op for all visitors).

From there, you can stroll north on Whitehead Street, which passes several popular attractions. These include the Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum, and the Key West Lighthouse. Farther north are the historic Audubon House and Tropical Gardens, Harry Truman's Little White House Museum, and the Mel Fisher Museum (artifacts recovered by

the famous underwater treasure hunter). At the far-northern end of Whitehead, you'll find Mallory Square, home of the not-to-be-missed Sunset Celebration. Head a few blocks east of Duval to explore the Key West Cemetery, a must-see collection of aboveground graves that capture the island's quirky character. Nearby White Street features an array of art galleries.

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### Landmarks and Historic Sites

#### Casa Antigua

Ernest Hemingway's first Key West residence was an apartment above an auto dealership from which he composed *A Farewell to Arms*. Although his digs are now a private residence, you can visit the Pelican Poop Shoppe on the ground floor and the atrium garden. 314 Simonton St., Key West. Phone 305-292-9955.

#### Curry Mansion

Nestled among the historic homes of Caroline Street, this superb example of Queen Anne-style architecture was once the home of Florida's first millionaire. These days, the mansion is an antique-filled inn that visitors can tour. Open daily 8:30 am-5 pm. US\$5 adults, US\$1 children younger than 12. 511 Caroline St., Key West. Phone 305-294-5349.

#### Historic Gato Factory

A public exhibit on cigar manufacturer Eduardo Hidalgo Gato and the influence of the cigar industry on Key West sits in the former building of E.H. Gato Cigar Factory. 1100 Simonton St., Key West. Phone 305-295-4369.

#### Historic Seaport District

Also known as the Key West Bight, the Historic Seaport District was once the place where the shrimp boats docked. The harbor area was renovated and given its "historic" title in the 1990s, though a lot of people still know it as the Bight. Sunset-cruise sailboats, dive boats, fishing charters and other marine excursions berth there. A stroll through the small area will uncover a variety of shops, bars, attractions and restaurants. Front Street, Key West.

#### Key West Cemetery

This is a must-do: It offers a quirky peek at the city's history. The cemetery is serene and a bit scruffy, with the graves sitting aboveground in stone-encased caskets (the island's geology can't accept anything six feet under). On one headstone, a grieving widow has written of her departed spouse, "At least I know where he's sleeping tonight." But the most famous inscription is "I told you I was sick." A fenced area memorializes the 1898 sinking of the USS *Maine* in Havana Harbor. Open sunrise to dusk. Free. Margaret Street at Passover Lane, Key West.

#### Key West Lighthouse & Keeper's Quarters Museum

Built in 1847, the lighthouse was operational until 1969. To get the big picture of the town, you can climb the 88 steps to the top. Inside, you'll find the Fresnel lens, historic photos, navigational charts and vintage nautical memorabilia. Daily 9:30 am-4:30 pm. US\$8 adults, US\$4 students. Corner of Whitehead Street and Truman Avenue, Key West. Phone 305-294-0012.

#### Mallory Square

Mallory is best known as the site of one of Key West's peculiar traditions—the famous Sunset Celebration. Each evening at dusk, a crowd gathers to watch the sun dip into surrounding seas. Then everyone applauds when it disappears. Of course, honoring the setting sun is certainly not the only thing going on in the square. Before and after sunset, artisans peddle their handmade wares and performers put on a busker show, complete with jugglers, mimes and tightrope-walking cats.

The square also encompasses the Waterfront Playhouse, Cayo Hueso y Habana Museum, Memorial Sculpture Garden, Key West Aquarium, Shipwreck Historem and a slew of souvenir shops. Wall Street between Duval and Whitehead (a block north of Front Street), Key West.

#### Southernmost Point

One of the island's most visited sights, the Southernmost Point marks Key West's geographic position as the most southerly land mass in the continental U.S. It's not a solemn spot: It's marked by a giant striped buoy emblazoned with the words "Ninety Miles to Cuba." Take a picture: That's about all there is to do there. When the seas get rough, the Southernmost Point can see big waves, which sometimes leave water standing in the road. Intersection of Whitehead and South streets, Key West.

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### Museums

#### Audubon House and Tropical Gardens

This house was named for naturalist John James Audubon, who visited Key West in the 1800s. The three-story dwelling is classic Key West architecture—built by a shipwright, the entire wooden structure is held together with wooden pegs. Inside are some of Audubon's original etchings and lithographs, as well as period furnishings. The structure's original owner, Capt. John Geiger, was a harbor captain, a wrecker and one of Key West's wealthiest citizens. Adjacent to the house are tropical gardens. A gift shop is on the premises. Daily 9:30 am-5 pm, with the last tour at 4 pm. US\$10 adults. 205 Whitehead St., Key West. Phone 305-294-2116.

### East Martello Museum and Gallery

This museum is far away from Old Town—at the northern end of the island, adjacent to the airport. But it's the best museum dedicated to the history of Key West, and it's housed in a Civil War-era fort with grand views of the Atlantic Ocean. The exhibits, including a haunted doll named Robert, illustrate the island's history of shipwrecks, pirates and cigar making. Also showcases local artists. Daily 9:30 am-4:30 pm. US\$6 adults. 3501 S. Roosevelt Blvd., Key West. Phone 305-296-3913.

### Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum

In the 1930s, the famed author lived in this charming Spanish-colonial home, where he wrote *To Have or Have Not* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Today, it's probably Key West's most famous attraction, bringing in crowds who get to walk through the house and gardens (there are guides or you can do it yourself). Out back is the swimming pool, which was the first built for a private residence in Key West. You're allowed to peek into Hemingway's roped-off writing studio, but you don't get to go inside. His cats (or at least their offspring)—inbred six-toed cats for the most part, dozens upon dozens of them—roam the grounds freely. Daily 9 am-5 pm. US\$11 adults. 907 Whitehead St., Key West. Phone 305-294-1136. <http://www.hemingwayhome.com>.

### Fort Zachary Taylor State Historic Site

This onetime Union fort is now home to a museum of Civil War weapons and memorabilia—including the largest collection of Civil War cannons in the U.S. There's also a small beach near the fort, which offers some of the island's best swimming. Daily 8 am-sunset, with tours at noon and 2 pm. US\$1.50 admission for pedestrians and bicyclists, US\$3.50 per driver of a motorized vehicle, US\$6 for a driver and an additional person, and US\$0.50 per person thereafter. At the foot of Southard at the Truman Annex, Key West. Phone 305-292-6713.

### Harry S. Truman's Little White House Museum

Members of the Washington power elite went to Truman's Little White House to unwind during his presidential term. "I've a notion to move the capital to Key West and just stay," Truman wrote his wife, Bess. Thomas Edison also lived in the home. Nowadays the Truman Annex is a residential development that also holds the Little White House Museum. Daily 9 am-4:30 pm. US\$11 adults. 111 Front St., Key West. Phone 305-294-9911.

### Heritage House Museum & Robert Frost Cottage

The 1830s home and gardens of historic preservationist Jessie Porter played host to many famous Key West visitors, including poet Robert Frost, who stayed in an on-site cottage, and playwright Thornton Wilder. Antiques and photographs are on display. Monday-Saturday 10 am-4 pm. 410 Caroline St., Key West. Phone 305-296-3573. <http://www.heritagehousemuseum.org>.

### Key West Museum of Art & History at the Custom House

The building that holds this museum was completed in 1891 as a Custom House. It was there that the Court of Inquiry held proceedings after the 1898 sinking of the USS *Maine* in Havana Harbor (which led to the Spanish-American War). The museum now houses a permanent exhibit on the incident. On a lighter note, art lovers will be entertained by colorful folk paintings of old Key West, as well as portraits of locally famous faces. The museum also features rotating exhibits. Daily 9 am-5 pm. US\$7 adults. 281 Front St., Key West. Phone 305-295-6616.

### Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Society Treasure Museum

This museum pays tribute to the late modern-day wrecker who made his fame and fortune in 1985 by finding the Spanish galleon *Nuestra Senora de Atocha*, which sank in a storm off the Keys in 1622. It yielded US\$400 million in gold and silver objects. You can watch a short film about Fisher's work and view several exhibits that provide background on the *Atocha* and other Spanish treasure fleets of the 1600s as well as the slave ship *Henrietta Marie*, which sank off the Florida Keys in 1700. The real treat: seeing some of the booty that Fisher brought up from the sea floor, including gold chains and jewelry. You even get to heft a gold bar. The museum features rotating exhibits and a gift shop. Daily 9:30 am-5:30 pm. US\$10 adults. 200 Greene St., Key West. Phone 305-294-2633.

### The Southernmost House Grand Hotel & Museum

Long closed to the public, this circa 1890s oceanfront manse exhibits Hemingway artifacts and the signatures of U.S. presidents, some of whom once stayed there. Daily 9 am-5 pm. US\$8 adults. 1400 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-296-3141.

### The Wrecker's Museum

Located smack dab in the middle of the Duval Street action is the oldest house in Key West. Built in 1829, the home also boasts the only detached cookhouse remaining in South Florida. The museum contains artifacts from the days when salvaging shipwrecks was big business in Key West. Daily 10 am-4 pm. US\$5 adults. 322 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-294-9502.

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### Nature

Key West is really a tropical garden. As you stroll around, you'll notice palm trees shading peaceful verandas, large rubber trees and Norfolk Island pines, banyan trees with their dramatic aerial roots, and red mangroves whose odd roots reach out into the ocean. You'll find streets vivid with royal poinciana and fragrant from the frangipani. Fruit

trees—papaya, avocado, banana and, of course, key lime—are everywhere. Check the mahogany trees to see if orchids have attached themselves.

#### **Key West Butterfly & Nature Conservatory**

Some 50-60 species of butterflies flutter freely among tropical plants and waterfalls, and visitors can view exhibits as well as a documentary about the winged creatures. A gift shop is on the premises. Daily 9 am-5 pm; last tickets sold at 4:30 pm. US\$10 adults. 1316 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-296-2988. <http://www.keywestbutterfly.com>.

#### **Little Hamaca Park**

Bird-watchers will be happy in Key West: Almost 200 species live or visit there annually. Heron, ibis and other birds gather in Little Hamaca Park, a wildlife sanctuary (rescued from condo developers in 1991) and a salt pond adjacent to Smathers Beach. At the turn of the last century, Conchs used the shallow pond to evaporate seawater and collect salt. Government Road at Flagler Avenue, Key West. Phone 305-294-2116.

#### **Nancy Forrester's Secret Garden**

At this delightful spot only a few minutes from Duval Street, Nancy grows rain-forest species and other exotic tropical plants, including 150 palm species, aroids, elephant ears, philodendrons, hanging orchids and breadfruit. Daily 10 am-5 pm. US\$6. 1 Free School Lane (off the 500 block of Simonton Street), Key West.

#### **Reef Relief Environmental Education Center**

A film and exhibits are designed to educate the public about endangered species and coral reefs, including the longest in the continental U.S., which lines the Florida Keys. A gift shop is around the corner. Monday-Saturday 9 am-5 pm. Free. 201 William St., Key West. Phone 305-294-3100.

#### **Turtle Kraals Museum**

Sea turtles, once considered a delicacy and now an endangered species, are the educational focus of this museum and gift shop set on the site of a former turtle cannery. Daily noon-4 pm. Free. Visitors can interact with marine life for a fee. 200 Margaret St., Key West. Phone 305-294-0209. <http://www.seaturtle museum.org>.

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### **Zoos and Wildlife**

#### **Key West Aquarium**

Key West has one of the nation's oldest open-air aquariums. Built as an Emergency Relief Administration project in 1935, the aquarium was the island's first tourist attraction. You can admire hundreds of varieties of brightly colored tropical fish, sawfish, tarpon and sharks, and you can touch starfish, crabs and conchs. Daily 10 am-6 pm. US\$9 adults, US\$4.50 for children ages 4-12. 1 Whitehead St. (facing Mallory Square), Key West. Phone 305-296-2051.

#### **Key West Marine Park**

Snorkeling or swimming off South, Dog and Higgs beaches affords the opportunity to view live spur-and-groove coral formations planted by the nonprofit environmental group Reef Relief and the city of Key West. Phone 305-294-3100.

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## **Recreation**

### **Beaches**

Key West is surrounded by clear, azure waters, but its beaches are unremarkable on the Florida Beach-O-Meter (a fate shared by the Keys as a whole). Because the reef prevents waves from crashing ashore and forming sand, the natural shoreline is relatively rough and spotted with chunks of coral. Some beaches have been "renourished" with sand imported from the Bahamas. But in most cases, the sand is dingy beige, and seaweed laces the shoreline. Beneath the water, sea grasses, though harmless, make the water appear less than crystal clear.

#### **Dog Beach**

Pooches are permitted on this spit of sand next to Louie's Backyard Restaurant. Located at the corner of Waddell Avenue and Vernon Street, it's the only dog-friendly beach in town.

#### **Fort Zachary Taylor State Historic Site Beach**

This small beach is in a stand of pines at the former fort. Daily 8 am-sunset. US\$1.50 for pedestrians and bicyclists, US\$2.50 for drivers (plus US\$2.50 for the second occupant of the car and US\$0.50 for anyone else in the vehicle). Southard Street (at the Truman Annex), Key West.

#### **Higgs Beach**

Families prefer Higgs Beach, which is on the Atlantic side and close to Old Town. It offers watersport rentals, picnic areas and tennis courts. A stand of Australian pines provides some shade. Prepare for crowds—especially on weekends. Atlantic Boulevard (between White Street and Reynolds Road), Key West.

#### **Rest Beach**

Located at the end of White Street on the Atlantic Ocean, this beach features picnic tables, a pier and the city's AIDS

Memorial.

### **Smathers Beach**

This small, city-owned stretch of sand on the Atlantic side has decent swimming, but be wary of the rocky bottom. A variety of water toys (Windsurfers, sailboats) and activities (parasailing and Jet-Skiing) are available. Tends to be crowded, especially on weekends. South Roosevelt Boulevard (just west of the airport), Key West.

### **South Beach**

This shallow-water beach at the end of Duval Street on the Atlantic Ocean is a favorite with locals and features a concrete pier.

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## **Boating and Sailing**

### **Appledore**

Watching the sunset is a fierce hobby of Key Westers, and sunset cruises are a memorable way to view the island and the surrounding waters. The 86-ft/26-m windjammer *Appledore* offers one such cruise to catch the disappearance of the sun. The vessel also makes snorkel excursions. Daily November-May. Snorkel trips run daily 10:30 am-3:30 pm; sunset sails depart between 5 and 6:30 pm. US\$40 per person (includes beer, wine and soft drinks) for the sunset sails and US\$65 per person for the snorkel excursion. William Street at Key West's Historic Seaport, Key West. Phone 305-292-4768.

### **Danger Charters**

Offers half-day sailing, snorkeling and kayaking trips to a refuge accessed by a 65-ft/20-m wrecking-schooner replica and full-day beachcombing, kayaking, snorkeling and picnicking aboard a 40-ft/12-m power yacht. Half-day trips are US\$75 per person; full-day trips are US\$80 per person. Private charters are also available. 404 Cactus Drive, Key West. Phone 305-304-7999.

### **Flordays**

Snorkeling, kayaking, champagne sunset cruises and more are available to the public at the Key West Hyatt Resort Hotel. A 32-ft/10-m vessel takes kayakers out to the backcountry for serene paddling. Private charters are also available. The sunset cruise costs US\$39 per person; snorkel excursions are US\$45 per person. All excursions include beer, wine, soda and snacks. 601 Front St., Key West. Phone 305-744-8335.

### **Fury Catamarans**

Offers a nightly sunset champagne cruise, as well as snorkeling trips and parasailing. US\$32 adults for sunset cruise. Key West Hilton Resort & Marina, Key West. Phone 305-294-8899. <http://www.furycat.com>.

### **Island Watersports**

Offers boat and Jet Ski rentals as well as tours that make a stop at nearby Sunset Key, which is accessed only by boat. Vessels measure 20-27 ft/6-8 m in length and can accommodate up to 10 people. Charter captains are available. Rates range US\$55 per half-hour for the Jet Ski rental (plus US\$5 for a passenger) to US\$750 for a full day aboard a 27-ft/8-m boat. At the Key West Hilton Resort & Marina, 245 Front St., Key West. Phone 305-296-1745.

### **Key West Boat Rental**

Based at the Galleon Marina favored by yachtsmen, this facility satisfies all your boating desires, including waterskiing, snorkeling, diving, fishing and Waverunner tours. 617 Front St., Key West. Phone 305-294-2628.

### **Mosquito Coast Island Outfitters**

One of the best ways to see the island is at water level aboard a sea kayak, where you may get up-close views of nesting herons and ibis, or spotted eagle rays, conch and spiny sea urchins in just a few feet/meters of water. The Gulf of Mexico waters are generally calm and easily navigable—if you can paddle a kayak. Mosquito Coast conducts guided backcountry tours. Tours run daily 8:45 am-3 pm and start at US\$55 per person. 310 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-294-7178.

### **Sunny Day Catamarans**

Four catamarans of various sizes set sail for sunset cruises, snorkel expeditions, dolphin watches and journeys to Dry Tortugas National Park. Excursions range US\$30 adults for the sunset sail to US\$115 adults for the Dry Tortugas trip. Elizabeth and Greene streets at Key West's Historic Seaport, Key West. Phone 305-296-5556.

### **Sunset Water Sports**

Rents small sailboats, motorboats, Jet Skis, Windsurfers and other water toys. They'll also take you parasailing or waterskiing. Daily 9 am-6 pm. Prices start at US\$15 per hour for a kayak and US\$15 per person for a banana-boat ride. Smathers Beach, 2323 S. Roosevelt Blvd., Key West. Phone 305-296-2554.

### **Western Union**

The historic 130-ft/40-m schooner *Western Union* was built in Key West and launched there as a messenger for the Western Union Telegraph Company in 1939. Day, sunset and stargazer cruises are offered. Day sails cost US\$40

adults; stargazer cruises are US\$49 adults; sunset cruises are US\$59 adults. William Street at Key West's Historic Seaport, Key West. Phone 305-292-1766.

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### Fishing

The waters around Key West and the Dry Tortugas are full of bonefish, tarpon, mangrove snapper, wahoo, dolphin fish, and yellowfin and blackfin tuna. Cobia, amberjack and large black grouper also lurk over wreck sites in the Gulf and Atlantic. To do battle with big, water-thrashing trophy marlin and sailfish, boats head out into the Gulf Stream. Fishing boats, from light tackle to trolling to party boats, are available for hire at all marinas.

### Big Fish on Fly

One of Key West's greatest experiences can be had with a guide and a flats boat, poling through the shallow waters in search of tarpon, bonefish and permit. Capt. Ben Ionnatta offers a full-day trip, light tackle or fly-fishing, with all gear, bait and licenses included. Advance reservations suggested. (For reservations during tarpon season—in May and June—call two months in advance.) US\$400 for up to two people. Phone 305-744-6481. <http://www.bigfishonfly.com>.

### Can't Miss

If you're just looking for a morning spent plunking a baited hook over the side of a boat for yellowtail, grouper or another good-eating catch, take a half-day trip on the *Can't Miss*. US\$33. Garrison Bight Marina, Key West. Phone 305-296-3751.

### Gulfstream III

Captained by Walter Kirchner and docked at City Marina at Garrison Bight, this 65-ft/20-m party boat takes passengers to the reef for grouper and snapper. Trips are 9:30 am-4:30 pm. July and August evening excursions are offered 6 pm-1 am. US\$40 includes bait and tackle; rods can be rented for US\$3; discounted fares available for children and sunbathers. 1801 N. Roosevelt Blvd., Key West. Phone 305-296-8494.

### Key West Pro Guides

Guides specializing in flats, backcountry, reef, wrecks and offshore are available to anglers. Phone 305-296-6602.

### Lethal Weapon Charters

Captain Ted's full- and half-day deep-sea charters target species such as sailfish and shark. Multiday trips to the Dry Tortugas also are offered. At the Hilton Resort, 1420 Angela St., Key West. Phone 305-296-6999.

### Linda D.

Two 40-ft/12-m vessels venture daily to the reef and offshore. Half- and full-day charters are available. Target species include dolphin, wahoo, grouper and sailfish. At Garrison Bight Marina, corner of U.S. Highway 1 and Palm Avenue, Key West. Phone 305-296-9798.

### Lucky Fleet

A variety of charters aboard the *Li'l Luck*, *Lucky Strike* and *Lucky Too* venture to the reef, backcountry and offshore. At the end of Margaret Street at the Historic Key West Seaport, Key West. Phone 305-294-1195.

### Venus Charters

For light-tackle sportfishing, try Capt. Karen Luknis' Venus Charters. She'll create a personalized half-day or full-day charter aboard her 25-ft/8-m Wellcraft, with an emphasis on low-impact fishing and other activities such as snorkeling and birding. Garrison Bight Marina, Key West. Phone 305-292-9403.

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### Scuba Diving and Snorkeling

With a reef fronting the Keys on the Atlantic side, Key West makes a good base for snorkeling or diving excursions. You'll need to take a boat trip to see anything worthwhile, however: The reef is 7 mi/11km out. Conditions can vary a great deal off the Keys, especially in winter, but when the seas are calm, visibility is good—up to 100 ft/30 m. In addition to stingrays, lobster, nurse sharks, yellowtail, moray eels, huge brain corals, sea turtles and all kinds of other sea life, there are several shipwrecks in the area. The best dive sites near Key West are Sand Key, Rock Key, Dry Rock and Sambos. Many hotels have activity centers for watersports that rent equipment and organize tours.

Snorkeling requires no special instruction, but to go scuba diving, you must be a certified diver and present your C card to rent equipment—unless you're taking an instruction course. One-day introductory courses are often available for beginners.

### Captain's Corner Dive Center

Offers scuba and snorkeling excursions. US\$30 for a snorkel trip, US\$35-\$40 for a scuba trip. 125 Ann St., Key West. Phone 305-296-8865.

### Dive Key West

Snorkel trips are US\$40; dive trips begin at US\$59 (tanks and weights not included). 3128 N. Roosevelt Blvd., Key

West. Phone 305-296-3823.

### Easy Day Charters

Snorkelers can venture out with Easy Days to explore the coral reefs and shallow wrecks around Key West. The company also offers fishing charters and dolphin tours. Daily 1:30-5:30 pm. US\$85 per person. Phone 305-294-3095.

### Key West Diving Society

US\$35-\$50 for a snorkel trip, US\$60-\$90 for a scuba trip. At Conch Harbor Marina, 951 Caroline St., Key West. Phone 305-292-3221.

### Lost Reef Adventures

US\$30 for a snorkel trip, US\$56-\$70 for a scuba trip. 261 Margaret St., Key West. Phone 305-296-9737.

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## DayTrips

**Dry Tortugas National Park.** About 70 mi/110 km west of Key West on Garden Key in the Dry Tortugas is an imposing brick fortress, Fort Jefferson, that has a long and varied history. Construction began in the 1840s, and the fort was intended to protect ships hauling cargo to the eastern seaboard. But it was never finished and never used as a fort. Parts of it were put to use as a federal prison—its most famous prisoner was Dr. Samuel Mudd, the physician who set John Wilkes Booth's broken leg after he had assassinated U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. (Mudd was later cleared of any involvement in the assassination.) Today, the island is best known as a bird refuge—more than 150 species have been spotted, including the magnificent frigate birds, which nest in a rookery on an uninhabited island just off Garden Key. You can spend a day exploring the fort and its small museum, as well as hiking the trails, picnicking and snorkeling over coral reefs. The island is accessible by air or sea only, with planes and boats departing from Key West.

**National Key Deer Refuge.** Tiny deer no larger than a medium-size dog live on Big Pine Key, about 30 mi/50 km northeast of Key West. The Key deer, which number about 400, are thought to be related to the white-tailed deer. The refuge is open to the public, with one stipulation: Don't feed the creatures. They seem to love junk food and congregate in large numbers beside the roads in hopes of receiving handouts. Instead, cars hit them. You can see them on the walking trails, especially in the morning and just before sunset. Take U.S. Highway 1 from Key West about 45 minutes to Big Pine Key.

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## Local Tours

There are several good tour operators in Key West if you want some assistance in seeing the city. If you're arriving on a cruise ship, it's possible to book your own tour and bypass the ship-sponsored tours. Doing so may save a few dollars—but keep in mind that it will take some time to contact the operators, comparison shop and make a booking.

If you'd rather see the area from the air, half-day and full-day flightseeing trips can be arranged through several companies based at the airport. One popular flight destination is Dry Tortugas National Park.

### Conch Tour Train

This is the best known of the local tours. It isn't really a train but is rather a series of open-air canopied trams pulled by a motor vehicle disguised as a locomotive. (You'll most certainly see the trains rolling through the streets even if you don't take the tour—they seem to be everywhere.) The nonstop 90-minute tour takes you past about 100 points of interest. You can catch the train at two spots in town: On Front Street by Mallory Square and the Sponge Market, and at the Flagler Station on Caroline Street in the Historic Seaport. You can also buy tickets at the North Roosevelt station and take a shuttle to one of the other stops. Daily 9 am-4 pm (until 4:30 pm from the Front Street Station). US\$22. Phone 305-294-5161.

### Gay Trolley Tours

A rainbow-flagged trolley tour of gay-friendly Key West winds past literary and historic sites and details the impact gays have had on the island. Saturday at 11 am. US\$22. 512 South St., Key West. Phone 305-294-4603.

### Ghost Tours of Key West

Guided walks through the island town include stops at a haunted Hard Rock Cafe, where a former owner committed suicide, and Captain Tony's Saloon, where a tree once used for hangings stretches up through the building. Tours take 90 minutes and depart daily at 8 and 9 pm. US\$18 adults. 430 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-294-9255. <http://www.hauntedtours.com>.

### Island Aeroplane Tours

Fly in an open-cockpit, three-seater plane for tours of Key West. Prices range US\$120 for a tour of beaches, resorts and shipwrecks to US\$250 for an aerobatic tour. Instruction is also offered. South Roosevelt Boulevard (at Key West International Airport), Key West. Phone 305-294-8687.

### Key West Pub Crawl

Guided two-and-a-half-hour walking tours begin at Billie's bar and stop at four additional watering holes. US\$35 adults,

includes five drinks and a souvenir T-shirt. 407 Front St., Key West. Phone 305-744-9804.

### **Lloyd Mager Bike Tour**

One of the best ways to observe Old Town's gingerbreaded, 19th-century architecture is on a bike tour. Local environmentalist Lloyd Mager leads 90-minute bike tours down side streets to see the town's known and unknown quirks. Prices vary depending on the tour. Phone 305-294-1882.

### **Old Town Trolley**

This enclosed vehicle (owned by the same company as the Conch Train) makes 90-minute loops around the island. The trolley stops at nine different sites, where riders can get on and off at will. Buy a ticket at the Mallory Square or North Roosevelt stations. Daily 9 am-4:30 pm. US\$22 adults. Phone 305-296-6688.

### **Seaplanes of Key West**

Daily flights to Dry Tortugas National Park. Prices begin around US\$180 adults. 3471 S. Roosevelt Blvd., Key West. Phone 305-294-0709.

### **Sharon Wells Walking Tour**

If you'd like to hoof it around town, look into author and guide Sharon Wells' personalized one- to two-hour guided walking tours, which focus on the town's architecture and history. US\$20. Phone 305-294-8380.

### **Trails of Margaritaville**

A guided walking tour of Jimmy Buffett's Key West, including his recording studio, former home and the bars in which he has played. Departs 4 pm most days. US\$20 adults. 428 Greene St., Key West. Phone 305-292-2040.

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## **Itineraries**

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### **Day Plans**

*To help you make the most of your time in Key West, we've designed two different itineraries.*

#### *PLAN A*

### **The Old Man and the City**

Start your visit with one of the city's best overviews—the 90-minute Conch Train Tour that leaves from the Front Street Station and glides by more than 100 points of interest on this visually enchanting little island. After the tour, walk south on Whitehead Street to the Hemingway House, where the author wrote some of his famous works.

Head back north to Petronia and then west to the intersection of Petronia and Thomas. Stop at Blue Heaven for a drink and basket of conch fritters. Afterward, head over to Duval Street and duck into some of the boutiques and galleries for souvenirs.

#### *PLAN B*

### **Bike Tour, Cemetery, Sunset**

You'll need to call in advance to arrange a bike tour with Lloyd Mager, the environmentalist who leads tours around Old Town. (He allows time to dismount and explore the quirkiest spots on the island.) After the tour, walk to the island's center and the Key West Cemetery. Meander through the cemetery and be sure to read the inscriptions on the stone-encased, aboveground caskets (don't miss the famous epitaph, "I told you I was sick").

Have lunch and a cold drink at the Rooftop Cafe in Mallory Square (and you *must* order the key lime pie). If you have time in the afternoon, try to fit in a glass-bottom boat tour.

When the sun inches toward the horizon, head for the waterside carnival at Mallory Square, which brings out the city's cast of characters.

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## **DINING**

Not surprisingly, seafood is the mainstay in Key West, and much of it is fresh from nearby waters. Florida lobster and stone crabs are good choices, as is conch, a chewy shellfish best served in soups or in fritters (deep-fried in a spicy batter). Many of the restaurants have been influenced by Cuba and other parts of the Caribbean and serve what is known as Floribbean-style cuisine. For dessert, try—what else?—key lime pie, which has a tart custard filling and a

graham-cracker crust.

General dining times are 6:30-10:30 am for breakfast, 11 am-2 pm for lunch and 6-10 pm for dinner. Many bars and restaurants in Old Town serve food until the wee hours of the morning.

Expect to pay within these guidelines for a meal for one, not including drinks, tax or tip: \$ = less than US\$10; \$\$ = \$10-\$20; \$\$\$ = US\$21-\$30; and \$\$\$\$ = more than US\$30.

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## Favorites

### Alice's Key West Restaurant

The dinner menu at Alice's is a wonderland of exotic gourmet dishes—marinated ostrich and Asian-spiced, wild-boar baby back ribs. For the less adventurous, there's a Brazilian pan-seared skirt steak. Chef Alice Weingarten's heavenly desserts include cappuccino bread pudding topped with Chantilly cream. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 1114 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-292-5733.

### Alonzo's Oyster Bar

Locals and visitors alike share a love for Alonzo's, set along the Historic Harborwalk overlooking A&B Marina. Steamed in a garlic sherry broth, the clams on the half-shell are among the raw-bar offerings. The chef gets creative with a white clam chili and combines entrees with New England, Cajun and island-style bents. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 700 Front St., Key West. Phone 305-294-5880.

### Bahama Mama's

The best conch in town is at this breezy Bahama Village eatery. The conch chowder features a clear base that's even more flavorful than the red-base variety. Bahamian coconut bread is served with breakfast. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 324 Petronia St., Key West. Phone 305-294-3355.

### El Siboney

Difficult to find but worth seeking out, El Siboney makes up in flavor what it lacks in decor. The family-owned restaurant has long satisfied locals with its modest prices and robust, home-style Cuban flavors. Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 900 Catherine St., Key West. Phone 305-296-4184.

### Mangoes

Set in the heart of Duval Street and serving tantalizing island-style cuisine, Mangoes is an ideal spot to sate the appetite while people-watching. It's tough to resist dinner starters such as a wild-mushroom martini or a grilled quail plate, but leave room for creative to classic island entrees—yellowtail snapper with a passion-fruit, white-wine sauce, and jerk pork with fried plantains. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 700 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-292-4606.

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## Local and Regional

### Blue Heaven

This restaurant's Caribbean-colored building was once a bordello, and it's said that Hemingway refereed boxing matches there. Today, it's an interesting mix of upscale cuisine and down-to-earth surroundings. Most of the tables sit outside, where chickens peck through the dirt as you eat. The menu leans toward Caribbean cuisine: seafood, conch salad, jerk dishes and the super-rich banana bread for dessert. The cornbread is the best we've ever had at a restaurant. If you go for breakfast, try the blueberry pancakes. Open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner (Sunday for brunch and dinner only). \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 729 Thomas St., Key West. Phone 305-296-8666.

### Cafe Marquesa

Housed in one of Key West's more artfully restored buildings, this restaurant offers consistently good service and food—usually combinations of fresh seafood and Caribbean sauces (for instance, grilled shrimp with black-bean salsa and coconut rice). The decor is muted and sophisticated, and the dress code calls for more than shorts and T-shirts. Open daily for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 600 Fleming St., Key West. Phone 305-292-1244.

### Rooftop Cafe

Located in the heart of Mallory Square, the Rooftop Cafe has great views of the historic buildings lining the waterfront. The restaurant serves mainstream cuisine laced with regional influences. Specialties include Jamaican jerk chicken and Florida crawfish in a citrus beurre blanc sauce. The key lime pie is possibly the best in town. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended for dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 310 Front St., Key West. Phone 305-294-2042.

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## Cuisines

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## American

### Camille's

Inexpensive and a favorite with locals, Camille's serves gourmet home-style meals. Eggs Benedict is a weekend breakfast specialty, and the macadamia-nut-encrusted yellowtail snapper is a must-try. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 1202 Simonton St., Key West. Phone 305-296-4811.

### Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville Cafe

An occasional resident who launched his career from Key West, well-known singer/songwriter/tropical party guy Jimmy Buffett sang about his cheeseburgers in paradise long before he opened this restaurant right on Duval Street. It serves burgers, salads and fresh seafood. At night, rock 'n' roll bands transform the place into a music hall. Open daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 500 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-292-1435.

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## Asian

### Kyushu

Semiprivate rooms with low seating add to the ambience at Kyushu, which serves sushi and other Japanese fare. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 921 Truman Ave., Key West. Phone 305-294-2995.

### Thai Cuisine

Look for lots of locals at this eatery that adds spice to the island. You'll find pad thai, red or green curry seafood, fried or steamed red snapper with ginger sauce, and more on the menu. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 513 Greene St., Key West. Phone 305-294-9424.

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## Italian

### Antonia's

Key West's best Italian restaurant burned down in a 1995 fire, but it was rebuilt exactly as it had been. The popular Northern Italian trattoria serves luscious fettuccine, capellini and lasagna, as well as fresh fish and fine veal. If you're lucky, the catch of the day will be snapper baked with white wine and fennel. A baked apple tart with *creme anglaise* is a perfect way to top it all off. Open daily for dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 615 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-294-6565.

### La Trattoria

Owned and operated by the Vitale family of Sicily, La Trattoria is known for its classic Italian dishes and romantic setting. Pasta dishes include penne puttanesca and lasagna with meat sauce. *Zuppa di pesce* is a seafood highlight; *bistecca e aragosta* equates to surf and turf. Daily for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 524 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-296-1075.

### Mangia Mangia

The semolina and egg pastas served at this popular cafe are all made fresh daily on the premises. Locals and tourists alike keep the cheerful dining room and garden busy year-round. The menu is small, offering basic sauces served over pasta, as well as such specialties as fresh sea scallops with pesto and cream, and fettuccini Alfredo with smoked salmon, basil and peas. Fish and chicken from the grill and a roasted Tuscan duck round out the menu. Extensive wine list. Daily for dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 900 Southard St., Key West. Phone 305-294-2469.

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## Seafood

### A&B Lobster House

Set above Alonzo's Oyster Bar, the refined A&B harkens back to the Key West days of old. The menu combines seafood classics, such as bouillabaisse and lobster beak, with tantalizing gourmet offerings including pepper-seared tuna steak with cognac cream. The wine list is extensive, and patrons complete meals by lighting up cigars in the adjoining bar. Daily for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 700 Front St., Key West. Phone 305-294-5880.

### B.O.'s Fish Wagon

Buoys dangle from the ceiling at this funky local favorite, known for cheap eats and a fine fish sandwich. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. 801 Caroline St., Key West. Phone 305-294-9272.

### Conch Republic Seafood Company

This expansive, open-air eatery sits on the site of a former sponge dock on the Historic Harborwalk. Accented by exposed pipe ceilings and a large saltwater aquarium, the warehouse-chic environment is upstaged only by the food, much of which has a Florida and Caribbean flair. Island-style live entertainment is staged regularly on premises. Seafood dishes—Key West pink shrimp and Bahamian-cracked conch, for example—are the emphasis, but Conch Republic satisfies landlubbers with aged Black Angus beef offerings as well as chicken and pork alternatives. A baby conch farm is on the premises. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 631 Greene St., Key West. Phone 305-294-4403.

### Half Shell Raw Bar

A casual fish house on the site of a former shrimp-packing business, Half Shell is known for its "Eat it Raw" slogan, license-plate wall decor and reasonably priced, simply prepared seafood dishes. You'll find most shell and scale fish on the menu, a fisherman's platter, and broiled, fried and garlic seafood combos allow for sampling several species. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 231 Margaret St., Key West. Phone 305-294-7496.

## Steak Houses

### Martha's Steaks & Seafood

Martha's offers a rare opportunity to dine by the ocean in Key West, as piano music plays in the background. Dinner, wine and martini menus are provided. The oysters Rockefeller is the house specialty for starters; Angus beef entrees run the gamut of cuts, including strip, fillet and sirloin. Daily for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 3591 S. Roosevelt Blvd., Key West. Phone 305-294-3466.

### Michael's

Michael's bills itself as a steak house but also serves an array of fondues—wild mushroom and brie, for instance—as well as martinis and wines. All beef is prime and prepared to order. The veal-chop entree is an award winner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 532 Margaret St., Key West. Phone 305-295-1300.

### Pepe's Cafe and Steakhouse

Called the oldest restaurant in Key West, Pepe's Cafe opened on Duval Street in 1909. Today, it's located a few blocks away on Caroline Street, complete with a charming boathouse feel (lots of old wood, nautical fixtures and vintage photos). The dinner menu is limited to primarily steaks, chops and seafood. An oyster appetizer (baked or raw) is imperative for mollusk lovers. Great fish sandwiches and burgers top the lunch fare, and breakfast—omelettes, home fries, homemade granola and fresh-squeezed orange juice—is divine. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 806 Caroline St., Key West. Phone 305-294-7192.

## Other Options

### El Meson de Pepe

Since its opening in 1984, this family-owned Cuban eatery has grown to encompass two locations, including one in the brick-facade Cayo Hueso y Habana structure at popular Mallory Square. In addition to Cuban staples, such as *ropa vieja* (shredded beef), roast pork and *palomilla* steak, Chef Pepe Diaz offers such mouthwatering house specialties as filet mignon with a mushroom brandy sauce. Second location at 3800 N. Roosevelt Blvd., Key West. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 410 Wall St., Key West. Phone 305-295-2620.

### Louie's Backyard

A top-shelf restaurant with excellent food and the most romantic location of all the Key West eateries (the rear deck is built out over the water and serves as the bar). The location is an impeccably restored old conch house with a tin roof, high ceilings and awesome views. (The small bit of sand next to Louie's is known as Dog Beach, and at 5 pm, it's loaded with canine lovers and their coconut-retrieving pets.) The cuisine is a melange of Caribbean, Asian and Latin American. The menu changes frequently, with the exception of a few die-hard dishes such as the Florida lobster, braised in truffle butter and served with spinach and prosciutto. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 700 Waddell Ave., Key West. Phone 305-294-1061.

### nine one five

This restaurant is about as close to trendy as you'll get on the island—and it's one of the few places open late. Designed to be ordered tapas style, a couple dozen small dishes offer an artful variety of ingredients, with underlying currents of both Mediterranean and Asian cuisines. On the menu: imported chorizo with *manchego*, serrano ham with long-stem artichokes, dates stuffed with garlic and wrapped in bacon, and sugarcane pork kebabs with spicy Haitian slaw. The wine list is decent, or try a homemade lemongrass soda. Dine inside or out. Daily for dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 915 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-296-0669.

### Pisces

Formerly known as Cafe des Artistes, Pisces still offers the original restaurant's award-winning dishes, but the overall menu has made a complete shift from French to contemporary American cuisine, with an emphasis on local and exotic seafood. Specialties include pan-roasted halibut with jumbo lump crab and poached oysters, grilled shrimp in a Creole lobster sauce with candied pecans and black grouper bouillabaisse. Now a so-called boutique restaurant, Pisces is small, intimate and candlelit, with a collection of signed Andy Warhol prints on the walls. Very pricey. Very worth it. Daily for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 1007 Simonton St., Key West. Phone 305-294-7100.

### Square One

Classic in atmosphere and consistent in quality, Square One specializes in island-infused American cuisine for dinner. The pork tenderloin is marinated in a fig and balsamic vinegar mix; the grilled chicken breast is smothered in a mango-cayenne barbecue sauce. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major

credit cards. In Duval Square at 1075 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-296-4300.

### **Turtle Kraals Restaurant & Bar**

Set on the site of the island's first turtle cannery on the Historic Harborwalk, Turtle Kraals specializes in southwestern offerings and seafood prepared with an island flair. Menu items include everything from grilled and broiled seafood dishes to mango crab cakes, meat loaf and enchiladas. Even some breakfast items are nestled in tortillas. Turtle races are held on-site regularly. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 231 Margaret St., Key West. Phone 305-294-2640.

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## **ENTERTAINMENT**

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### **Nightlife**

Though it's always had the reputation of being a party town, Key West doesn't party any more strenuously than it does anything else, so it's more casual than crazed—rum drinks are sipped at outdoor bars rather than in neon-striped nightclubs. Along Duval Street, there's lots of live music: sometimes full bands playing rock, jazz and reggae, but more often solo guitar strummers/singers who are often cast in the mold of Key West's strummer-made-good, Jimmy Buffet. (According to our research, it's impossible to spend more than 27 minutes in any Key West bar before hearing a Jimmy Buffet song.)

A night out in Key West can last until 4 am at bars and clubs that cater to a late-night crowd. On the flipside, partiers always have the option of starting their fun early—say, about 9 or 10 in the morning (except on Sundays, when the island is dry until noon).

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### **Bars, Taverns and Pubs**

#### **Atlantic Shores**

The gay-friendly, clothing-optional poolside bar at Atlantic Shores Resort comes alive with local bands and DJ music of several genres. 510 South St., Key West. Phone 305-296-2491.

#### **Bar 801**

This small open-air lounge has three bars and drag queens on stage. Caters to a gay and lesbian crowd. Monday-Saturday from 11 am, Sunday from noon. 801 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-294-4737.

#### **Bull & Whistle**

The Bull & Whistle is three saloons in one: Live entertainment rocks Bull on the ground floor, billiard tables are in the Whistle upstairs, and clothing is optional at the Garden of Eden rooftop bar. 224 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-296-4565.

#### **Captain Tony's Saloon**

Hemingway fans in the know go to Captain Tony's because that's where the original Sloppy Joe's was back in Papa's time. (The author met his third wife there.) Before that, the building was a morgue. We sometimes suspect that it still is, based on some of the figures we've seen sliding off bar stools there. Captain Tony himself is sometimes on the scene, looking as grizzled as you might imagine from his name. (He served as Key West's mayor for a time.) There's usually a solo guitarist/singer performing. Monday-Saturday from 10 am, Sunday from noon. 428 Greene St., Key West. Phone 305-294-1838.

#### **Grand Vin**

An intimate wine shop and bar located in a historic Bahamian-style house. It offers a superb selection of wines, as well as an excellent view of the pedestrian traffic along Duval Street. Sit out on the wooden porch or at the tiny bar inside, where the owner loves to chat about wine and international adventures. Monday-Saturday from 10 am, Sunday from noon. 1107 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-296-1020.

#### **Green Parrot**

This is our favorite Key West stop—fewer souvenirs for sale, a little farther off Duval. It's a favorite haunt for locals and those who favor imported beer, games of pool, a good jukebox and a very casual atmosphere (complete with an unfurled parachute hanging over the bar). As one of the oldest bars in Key West, it has signs from other long-gone bars on the walls. The margaritas are excellent. Monday-Saturday from 10 am, Sunday from noon. 601 Whitehead St., Key West. Phone 305-294-6133.

#### **PT's Late Nite**

A longtime local favorite, this pub is known for billiards and late-night bites. 920 Caroline St., Key West. Phone 305-296-4245.

#### **Sloppy Joe's**

This bar has become a major sightseeing attraction in addition to being a watering hole. This is partly because of its connection to Ernest Hemingway: The bar was a favorite hangout for the author—though he likely spent most of his

time in the bar's original locale, just around the corner (now Captain Tony's Saloon). Sloppy Joe's popularity is also a result of a good marketing campaign (their ubiquitous T-shirts sport a picture of the bearded Papa). The bar has plenty of character: Cracked tile floors and turn-of-the-20th-century wooden fans attest to a Key West of days gone by. There's also a fair amount of today's Key West: big crowds, pricey souvenirs and live bands. Monday-Saturday from 9 am, Sunday from noon. 201 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-294-5717.

### **The Top**

Enjoy the lovely vista along with your drink at this bar, located at the top of the Crowne Plaza La Concha. Open daily 3-10 pm. 430 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-296-2991.

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## **Dance Clubs and Nightclubs**

### **Schooner Wharf**

Frequented by locals and tourists, the casual, open-air Schooner Wharf sits on the site of a former shrimp factory along Key West's Historic Harborwalk. Live entertainment is featured daily, and special events—a tattoo show and contest included—are held throughout the year. 202 William St., Key West. Phone 305-292-3302.

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## **Live Music**

### **Havana Docks**

Open only an hour before sunset to an hour after, Havana Docks is the best place around for an outdoor drink and live music with a sunset view. Open daily. 1 Duval St. (at the Pier House Resort), Key West. Phone 305-296-4600.

### **La-Te-Da**

This legendary gay guesthouse on the quieter, southern end of Duval has two bars: an open-air piano bar on the ground floor and a fancier lounge on the second floor (with balconies overlooking the street). Monday-Saturday from 11 am, Sunday from noon. 1125 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-296-6706.

### **One Duval**

A piano bar showcasing some of the island's finest talents. The setting is upscale and intimate, complete with a nice view of the water. Open daily from 8 pm. 1 Duval St. (at the Pier House Resort), Key West. Phone 305-296-4600.

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## **Performing Arts**

### **Music**

#### **Key West Symphony Orchestra**

Now in its seventh season under the baton of conductor and music director Sebrina Maria Alfonso, the orchestra is composed of professional musicians from throughout the country and performs some of the best of Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn and others. Concerts are held at the Tennessee Williams Theatre, 5901 College Road, Stock Island. Phone 305-292-1774.

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### **Theater**

#### **Waterfront Playhouse**

Home to the Key West Players, this theater provides an intimate setting for an array of quality performances. Mallory Square, Key West. Phone 305-294-5015.

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## **SHOPPING**

The streets are full of stores selling everything from T-shirts to cat memorabilia (it's the Hemingway influence) to original artwork. Old Town—especially Duval Street—is the main shopping area, home to both funky and pricey boutiques, as well as such mainstream retailers as Coach and Express.

**Shopping Hours:** Generally 10 am-5:30 or 6 pm, though many gift shops remain open until 9 or 10 pm.

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## **Bookstores**

### **Key West Island Books**

Stocks works by the island's literary greats, past and present, as well as other rare and used books. Daily 10 am-9 pm. 513 Fleming St., Key West. Phone 305-294-2904.

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## **Galleries**

### **Gallery on Greene**

One of Key West's best-known galleries, showcasing the works of local and Cuban artists. 606 Greene St., Key West. Phone 305-294-1669.

#### **Gingerbread Square Gallery**

Even if you don't buy, you can absorb many artistic interpretations of the area at this gallery showcasing Keys artists. Monday 10 am-6 pm, Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-10 pm. 1207 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-296-8900.

#### **Haitian Art Company**

Sells the works of more than 250 Haitian artists. Daily 10 am-6 pm. 600 Frances St., Key West. Phone 305-296-8932.

#### **Harrison Gallery**

Home to the wood sculptures of co-owner Helen Harrison, this gallery also features watercolors, oils and a variety of creations of local artists. 825 White St., Key West. Phone 305-294-0609.

#### **Helio Gallery Store**

Functional art is the focus of Helio, where local artists showcase their eclectic creations. Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, and by appointment. 814 Fleming St., Key West. Phone 305-294-7901.

#### **The Wave Gallery**

The Wave carries oils, acrylics, watercolors, mixed media and more by artists from throughout the country. Sculptor Barbara Grob's geckos are a highlight. 1100 White St., Key West. Phone 305-293-9428.

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### **Specialty Stores**

#### **Assortment Inc.**

Offers laid-back, "Key West-style" attire. Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday 11 am-6 pm. 514 Fleming St., Key West. Phone 305-294-4066.

#### **Besame Mucho**

Located in Bahama Village, this shop carries a small but diverse selection of great gifts from around the world: hand-cut soaps from Europe, hand-painted boxes and ornaments from Mexico, and lots of other little treasures. Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday 10 am-3 pm. 315 Petronia St., Key West. Phone 305-294-1928.

#### **Bird in Hand**

Carries imported collectibles and local artwork. 430 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-296-6324.

#### **Blue**

Stocks some of the most fashionable island clothing and accessories. 718 Caroline St., Key West. Phone 305-292-5172.

#### **Cat House**

The store specializes in a single animal, selling everything feline: figurines, candleholders, Christmas ornaments, calendars, books, you name it. Daily 9:30 am-midnight. 411 Greene St., Key West. Phone 305-295-7551.

#### **Conch Republic**

Stocks casual cotton clothes—to make you look more like a resident Conch. Monday-Saturday 10 am-10 pm, Sunday 11 am-7 pm. 725 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-292-9002.

#### **Fast Buck Freddie's**

Offers imaginative gifts, bathing suits, casual clothes and imported decorative items from around the world. Sunday-Friday 10 am-6 pm, Saturday 10 am-10 pm. 500 Duval St., Key West. Phone 305-294-2007.

#### **Key West Aloe**

For skin- and hair-care products rich in aloe, drop by this shop. It also gives free tours of its perfume factory. Monday-Friday 9 am-8 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-7 pm. 524 Front St., Key West. Phone 305-294-5592.

#### **Key West Hand Print Fabrics and Fashions**

Long after making its name in the 1960s by selling Lilly Pulitzer's designs, this shop is still at it—offering up brightly colored clothing and hand-painted fabrics. Daily 10 am-6 pm. 201 Simonton St., Key West. Phone 305-294-9535. <http://www.keywestfashions.com>.

#### **Kino Sandals**

Smell the leather, watch sandal makers at work and get a Key West best buy: All Kino footwear is priced at around US\$10. 107 Fitzpatrick St., Key West. Phone 305-296-7740.

#### **The Saltwater Angler**

You don't have to be an avid angler to dip into your wallet for the rods, reels, outerwear and artwork that fill this shop.

243 Front St., Key West. Phone 305-296-0700.

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## SECURITY

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### Personal Safety

Crime is not a major concern in this South Florida city, but use common sense: Watch out for pickpockets and purse snatchers, don't leave valuables such as cameras unattended and don't leave tempting items in plain sight in a parked vehicle. And if you rent a bike, make sure you lock it every time you leave it—even for just a moment.

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### Health

Good medical care is available in Key West. Sunburn is the biggest concern for visitors, so apply plenty of sunscreen and wear an audacious sombrero. Dehydration is also a potential problem—be certain to drink plenty of water throughout the day. Dial 911 in an emergency.

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### Dos and Don'ts

Do beware of visitors on scooters. Many of them drive like they've never been on one before. And they seem to run in packs.

Do expect crowds in the winter months, particularly on weekends. High season runs from Christmas through Easter. Major holidays throughout the year also see a lot of visitors.

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## HOTELS

Key West offers a variety of hotels, motels and bed-and-breakfast inns. Many are in historic buildings that reflect Key West's lively past. You can choose from beachfront hotels and motels or hotels in the heart of Old Town, where most of the activity and nightlife is. The cost of accommodations spikes in the high season, so make reservations well in advance to have the best selection.

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## City

### Crowne Plaza Hotel Resort

430 Duval St 33040 TEL: (1)305/296-2991 FAX: (1)305/294-3283  
<http://www.keywest.com/laconcha.html>

### Doubletree Grand Key Resort

3990 S Roosevelt Blvd 33040 TEL: (1)305/293-1818 FAX: (1)305/296-6962  
[information@grandkeyresort.com](mailto:information@grandkeyresort.com) <http://www.doubletreekeywest.com>

### Heron House

512 Simonton St 33040 TEL: (1)305/294-9227 FAX: (1)305/294-5692  
[heronkyw@aol.com](mailto:heronkyw@aol.com) <http://www.heronhouse.com>

### Hilton Key West Resort & Marina

245 Front St 33040 TEL: (1)305/294-4000 FAX: (1)305/294-4086  
<http://www.keywestresort.hilton.com>

### Hilton Sunset Key Guest Cottages

245 Front St 33040 TEL: (1)305/292-5300 FAX: (1)305/292-5395  
[infosunsetkeycottages@hilton.com](mailto:infosunsetkeycottages@hilton.com) <http://www.sunsetkeycottages.hilton.com>

### Hyatt Key West Resort & Marina

601 Front St 33040 TEL: (1)305/296-9900 FAX: (1)305/292-1038  
[mgharavi@@kwestpo.hyatt.com](mailto:mgharavi@@kwestpo.hyatt.com) <http://www.hyatt.com>

### La Mer & Dewey House Bed & Breakfast

506 & 504 South St 33040 TEL: (1)305/296-5611 FAX:  
[info@southernmostresorts.com](mailto:info@southernmostresorts.com) <http://www.southernmostresorts.com>

### Marquesa Hotel

600 Fleming St 33040 TEL: (1)305/292-1919 FAX: (1)305/294-2121  
[info@marquesa.com](mailto:info@marquesa.com) <http://www.marquesa.com>

#### **Pier House Resort & Caribbean Spa**

One Duval St 33040 TEL: (1)305/296-4600 FAX: (1)305/296-9085  
[info@pierhouse.com](mailto:info@pierhouse.com) <http://www.pierhouse.com>

#### **Sheraton Suites Key West**

2001 S Roosevelt Blvd 33040 TEL: (1)305/292-9800 FAX: (1)305/294-6009  
[reservations.00760@sheraton.com](mailto:reservations.00760@sheraton.com) <http://www.sheraton.com/keywest>

#### **The Gardens Hotel**

526 Angela St 33040 TEL: (1)305/294-2661 FAX: (1)305/292-1007  
<http://www.gardenshotel.com>

#### **The Ocean Key Resort & Spa**

0 Duval St 33040 TEL: (1)305/296-7701 FAX: (1)305/292-7685  
<http://www.oceankey.com>

#### **The Paradise Inn**

819 Simonton St 33040 TEL: (1)305/293-8007 FAX: (1)305/293-0807  
<http://theparadiseinn.com>

#### **Wyndham Casa Marina Resort**

1500 Reynolds St 33040 TEL: (1)305/296-3535 FAX: (1)305/296-2830  
<http://www.wyndham.com>

#### **Wyndham Reach Resort**

1435 Simonton St 33040 TEL: (1)305/296-5000 FAX: (1)305/296-2830  
<http://www.key-west.com>

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## **Airport**

### **Best Western Key Ambassador Resort Inn**

3755 S Roosevelt Blvd 33040 TEL: (1)305/296-3500 FAX: (1)305/296-9961  
[keyambbw@aol.com](mailto:keyambbw@aol.com) <http://www.keyambassador.com>

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## **PRACTICALITIES**

### **Geostats**

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Canadian citizens need either a passport or a certified copy of a birth certificate accompanied by photo ID. (We recommend a passport.) Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

**Population:** 25,700.

**Languages:** English, Spanish.

**Predominant Religions:** Christian (Protestant, Roman Catholic) and Jewish.

**Time Zone:** 5 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (-5 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 110 volts.

**Telephone Codes:** 305, area code.

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## Money

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### Currency Exchange

ATMs are just about everywhere, and traveler's checks are readily accepted.

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### Currency Exchange Rates

[See United States's Currency Exchange above.]

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### Tipping

The standard tip is 15%-20%; more if the service is exemplary.

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## Weather

The winter temperatures (highs in the 70s F/21-26 C, lows in the mid-60s F/18-19 C) sound idyllic, but the wind-chill factor can make it feel a lot colder—the island is way out in the ocean, after all. It can be extremely muggy and humid in the summer, with highs in the 90s F/mid-30s C and lows in the upper 70s F/mid-20s C, even though steady trade winds blow off the water.

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## Weather Forecast

### Current Weather Condition



**86 °F**  
**30 °C**

**Pressure:** 1013.58 Millibars

**Dew Point:** 71 °F / 22 °C

**Humidity:** 63%






**Visibility:** 9 Miles

**Wind:** 0 MPH (N)

**Comfort Index:** 91 °F / 33 °C

SCATTERED CLOUDS **Last Updated:** 9/26/2005 6:00:51 PM

### Extended Forecast Beginning 9/27/2005

TUE	Weather Condition	Day Hi	Day Low
	CLOUDY	<b>87 °F</b> <b>31 °C</b>	<b>77 °F</b> <b>25 °C</b>
WED	Weather Condition	Day Hi	Day Low
	CLOUDY	<b>87 °F</b> <b>31 °C</b>	<b>77 °F</b> <b>25 °C</b>
THU	Weather Condition	Day Hi	Day Low
	CLOUDY	<b>87 °F</b> <b>31 °C</b>	<b>78 °F</b> <b>26 °C</b>
FRI	Weather Condition	Day Hi	Day Low
	CLOUDY	<b>86 °F</b> <b>30 °C</b>	<b>77 °F</b> <b>25 °C</b>
SAT	Weather Condition	Day Hi	Day Low
	CLOUDY	<b>87 °F</b> <b>31 °C</b>	<b>77 °F</b> <b>25 °C</b>

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## What to Wear

There are very few reasons for formal clothes on Key West. Dressy often means a clean T-shirt. Cotton, linen and rayon clothes work best in the frequently humid, tropical climate. Long sleeves or a lightweight sweater help to cut the evening breezes, but a windbreaker is probably the best bet—especially if you plan to get out onto the water. Comfortable shoes or sandals, decent sunglasses and a hat are essential.

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## Communication

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### Mail and Package Services

#### U.S. Post Office

Key West's main post office. Monday-Friday 8 am-5 pm, Saturday 8 am-noon. 400 Whitehead St., Key West. Phone 305-294-2557.

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## Transportation

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Walking and bicycling are the best ways to explore Key West—the tiny island is pancake flat. You'll find bike shops all along Duval Street. Prices run about US\$15 a day, including a lock. Some shops will even deliver the bike to you.

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### Air

The local airport, Key West International (EYW), is at the eastern end of the island on South Roosevelt Avenue. Phone 305-296-5439. Rental car offices can be found at the airport, and other transportation is also readily available: Many of the big hotels provide courtesy shuttles, and taxis are usually lined up (expect a cab ride from the airport to the Old Town area to cost US\$12-\$18).

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### Car

Unless you are planning a day trip up the Keys, rental cars are not necessary or recommended. Parking is difficult and costly, and the narrow streets are often crowded with bicycles and pedestrians.

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### Public Transportation

Public buses make two loops around the island, one clockwise (the Old Town line) and one counterclockwise (with a terminal at Mallory Square). The fare is US\$0.75 (exact change required). Buses run about every 15 minutes.

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### Taxi

You can flag a taxi on the street—a common practice—or find one outside one of the larger hotels, such as the Holiday Inn or the Pier House. Or you can call for a pickup, and your cab will usually arrive within about 10 minutes. Taxis are metered.

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### Additional

There is no shortage of places to rent bicycles and scooters, and many hotels and guesthouses maintain their own bike fleet.

#### Adventure Bicycle and Scooter Rentals

Rents bicycles and scooters from multiple locations in town. Daily 9 am-5 pm. A bike with basket and lock will cost you US\$15 per day. Scooters are US\$35 for 24 hours for a one-person scooter, US\$65 for a two-person scooter. 1102 Key Plaza, Key West. Phone 305-293-9933.

#### Conch Bike Express

Charges US\$12 per bike for the first 24 hours, US\$35 for a week, including light, lock and basket. They'll deliver the bike to you at no extra charge. 3340 N. Roosevelt Blvd., Key West. Phone 305-294-4318.

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## For More Information

For more information about Key West and the Florida Keys, visit <http://www.fl-keys.com>, the official visitor Web site of the Monroe County Tourist Development Council.

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### Tourist Offices

#### Greater Key West Chamber of Commerce

Monday-Friday 8:30 am-6:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-6 pm. 402 Wall St., Key West. Phone 305-294-2587. Toll-free 800-527-8539. <http://www.keywestchamber.org>.

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## CALENDAR

Key West loves (some might say lives) to party, so festivals are serious business on this island. The residents celebrate their history and architecture with home tours, arts-and-crafts shows, and walking tours during Old Island Days.

One of Key West's best-known gatherings is the Hemingway Days Festival, a rowdy week of arm wrestling, brandy-snorting, short-story contests and the ever-popular Papa look-alike contest. The most raucous event of the year is Fantasy Fest, a costumed celebration of the outrageous. The island's last big happening of the year is the World Championship Offshore Powerboat Race Week—it's quite a spectacle to watch from shore, as racing boats travel at more than 120 mph/195 kph.

For more information about upcoming events in Key West, contact the Official Tourism Council for the Florida Keys. Toll-free 800-275-5397. <http://fla-keys.com>.

To call any of the numbers listed in this calendar from outside the U.S. or Canada, you must first dial your country's international access code, followed by the U.S. country code, 1.

Information in this calendar is subject to change and should be confirmed.

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## September, 2005

**5 Sep—Labor Day.** Public holiday.

**Early-Late September—Womanfest.** Women of all persuasions gather for this yearly celebration of femininity organized by the Key West Gay and Lesbian Community Center. Cocktail parties, sporting events and a hot-buns contest. For more information, call 888-324-2996. <http://www.womenfest.net>.

**Early-Late September—Mercury Outboards' S.L.A.M. Tournament.** A charity fishing event in which celebrities and everyday people angle for bonefish, tarpon and permit. Wyndham Casa Marina, 1500 Reynolds St. Call 305-664-2002 for more information.

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## October, 2005

**10 Oct—Columbus Day.** Public holiday.

**21-30 Oct—Fantasy Fest.** Thousands of costumed gamers and fantasy fans gather for this huge 10-day party. A parade, street fair, Latin party, ghost tours, fetish ball and more. Also the crowning of the King and Queen of Fantasy Fest. Various venues. For more information, call 305-296-1817. <http://fantasyfest.net>.

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## November, 2005

**11 Nov—Veterans Day.** Public holiday.

**13-20 Nov—World Championship Offshore Powerboat Race Week.** Billed as the biggest offshore powerboat race in the world. For more information, visit <http://www.superboat.com>.

**24 Nov—Thanksgiving.** Public holiday.

**25-30 Nov—Pirates in Paradise Festival.** Grab an eyepatch and don a tricornered hat for this pirate-crazy festival featuring pirate-attack re-enactments, a pub stroll, bucaner brunch and other swashbuckling events. Various venues. Call 877-895-2848 for more information. <http://www.piratesinparadise.com>. Continues through 4 Dec

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## December, 2005

**Early-Late December—Annual Key West House and Garden Tours.** Visitors ogle the flora and architecture of some of Key West's most gorgeous homes. For more information, call 305-294-9501. <http://www.oirf.org>. Continues through late March 2006

**Mid-Late December—Concert.** The Key West Symphony Orchestra presents a season of concerts featuring its core members and guest musicians. Tennessee Williams Theatre, 5901 College Road. For more information, call 305-292-1774. <http://www.keywestsymphony.com>. Continues through early April 2006

**1-4 Dec—Pirates in Paradise Festival.** Grab an eyepatch and don a tricornered hat for this pirate-crazy festival featuring pirate-attack re-enactments, a pub stroll, bucaner brunch and other swashbuckling events. Various venues. Call 877-895-2848 for more information. <http://www.piratesinparadise.com>. Concludes 4 Dec

**25 Dec—Christmas Day.** Public holiday.

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## January, 2006

**1 Jan—New Year's Day.** Public holiday.

**16 Jan—Martin Luther King Jr. Day.** Public holiday.

**Throughout January—Annual Key West House and Garden Tours.** Visitors ogle the flora and architecture of some of Key West's most gorgeous homes. For more information, call 305-294-9501. <http://www.oirf.org>. Continues through late March

**Throughout January—Concert.** The Key West Symphony Orchestra presents a season of concerts featuring its core members and guest musicians. Tennessee Williams Theatre, 5901 College Road. For more information, call 305-292-1774. <http://www.keywestsymphony.com>. Continues through early April

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## February, 2006

**20 Feb—Presidents Day.** Public holiday.

**Throughout February—Annual Key West House and Garden Tours.** Visitors ogle the flora and architecture of some of Key West's most gorgeous homes. For more information, call 305-294-9501. <http://www.oirf.org>. Continues through late March

**Throughout February—Concert.** The Key West Symphony Orchestra presents a season of concerts featuring its core members and guest musicians. Tennessee Williams Theatre, 5901 College Road. For more information, call 305-292-1774. <http://www.keywestsymphony.com>. Continues through early April

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## March, 2006

**Throughout March—Annual Key West House and Garden Tours.** Visitors ogle the flora and architecture of some of Key West's most gorgeous homes. For more information, call 305-294-9501. <http://www.oirf.org>. Concludes late March

**Throughout March—Concert.** The Key West Symphony Orchestra presents a season of concerts featuring its core members and guest musicians. Tennessee Williams Theatre, 5901 College Road. For more information, call 305-292-1774. <http://www.keywestsymphony.com>. Continues through early April

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## April, 2006

**Early April—Concert.** The Key West Symphony Orchestra presents a season of concerts featuring its core members and guest musicians. Tennessee Williams Theatre, 5901 College Road. For more information, call 305-292-1774. <http://www.keywestsymphony.com>. Concludes early April

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## May, 2006

**29 May—Memorial Day.** Public holiday.

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## July, 2006

**Early-Late July—Key West Summer Food & Wine Festival.** Enjoy local food and international wines in a picturesque island setting. Champagne tastings, minicruises and a battle of the bars. Various venues. <http://www.kwrba.com/festival.htm>. Continues through late August

**4 Jul—Independence Day.** Public holiday.

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## August, 2006

**Throughout August—Key West Summer Food & Wine Festival.** Enjoy local food and international wines in a picturesque island setting. Champagne tastings, minicruises and a battle of the bars. Various venues. <http://www.kwrba.com/festival.htm>. Concludes late August

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