

# Gay Key West Guide



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Key West, Florida, is renowned for its vibrant LGBTQ+ community, making it a top destination for gay travelers seeking sun, fun, and inclusivity. Nestled at the southernmost point of the continental United States, this island paradise boasts stunning beaches, lively nightlife, and a rich cultural history. Whether you're planning a romantic getaway, a wild weekend with friends, or a peaceful retreat, this comprehensive guide will help you navigate the best that Gay Key West has to offer.

## Getting to Key West

Traveling to Key West is easy, whether you're flying in or driving down the scenic Overseas Highway from Miami.

### By Air

Key West International Airport (EYW) is the main airport, with regular flights from major cities like Miami, Atlanta, and New York. From the airport, you can take a taxi or rideshare service to your accommodations.

### By Road

Driving offers breathtaking views along the 113-mile Overseas Highway, which connects the Florida mainland to the Keys. Along the way, you'll pass through various islands, each with its own charm. Keep in mind that parking can be limited in Key West, especially during peak tourist seasons.

# Where to Stay

Finding the perfect place to stay in Key West is essential for an enjoyable visit. The island offers a range of LGBTQ+-friendly accommodations, from luxury hotels to charming guesthouses.

## Top LGBTQ+-Friendly Hotels

1. La Te Da: A quintessential gay guesthouse known for its lively atmosphere and vibrant drag shows. The hotel features a pool, restaurant, and bar, making it a popular hangout.
2. The Equator Resort: An all-male clothing-optional resort, The Equator offers a relaxed vibe, two pools, and easy access to nearby attractions.
3. Island House: Another clothing-optional resort, Island House is known for its friendly staff and welcoming environment, offering amenities like a sauna, gym, and pool.
4. The Gardens Hotel: For those seeking a more upscale experience, this boutique hotel is set in a beautiful garden and is known for its serene atmosphere.
5. Key West Bed and Breakfast: This charming B&B offers personalized service and is conveniently located near the action of Duval Street.

## Exploring the Beaches

Key West is famous for its beautiful beaches, perfect for sunbathing, swimming, and socializing. The island's beaches cater to different tastes and preferences.

## Popular Beaches

- Higgs Beach: A popular spot for the LGBTQ+ community, Higgs Beach features a lively atmosphere, picnic areas, and volleyball courts. It's also home to the West Martello Tower and the African Slave Memorial.
- Smathers Beach: The largest public beach in Key West, Smathers offers plenty of space for sunbathing and water sports. While it's not exclusively a gay beach, it attracts a diverse crowd.
- Fort Zachary Taylor State Park: Known for its stunning sunsets, this beach offers a more natural setting, with opportunities for snorkeling and exploring the historic fort.

## Nightlife in Key West

Key West boasts a vibrant nightlife scene with plenty of bars, clubs, and entertainment options

predominantly catering to the LGBTQ+ community.

## **Must-Visit Bars and Clubs**

1. 801 Bourbon Bar: A cornerstone of the gay nightlife scene, 801 Bourbon features karaoke, drag shows, and a lively dance floor. It's a great place to start your night.
2. Pecker's Bar & Grill: Known for its friendly bartenders and relaxed vibe, Pecker's is perfect for casual drinks and conversation before heading to more energetic venues.
3. The Monster: This iconic bar is famous for its drag shows and high-energy dance parties. It's a must-visit for anyone looking to experience Key West's nightlife at its finest.
4. Aqua Nightclub: Another lively spot for drag shows and dancing, Aqua is known for its inclusive atmosphere and diverse crowd.
5. The Green Parrot: While not exclusively an LGBTQ+ venue, The Green Parrot is a local favorite with live music, great drinks, and a welcoming vibe.

## **Dining Options**

Key West is home to a diverse culinary scene, offering everything from fresh seafood to international cuisine. Here are some LGBTQ+-friendly dining options to consider.

## **Top Restaurants**

- Havana 1957: A vibrant Cuban restaurant that offers a lively atmosphere and delicious cuisine. The mojitos are a must-try!
- Blue Heaven: Famous for its outdoor dining and roaming chickens, Blue Heaven serves up delicious breakfast and brunch options, along with a laid-back vibe.
- The Lobster Shack: A casual spot for fresh seafood, The Lobster Shack is known for its lobster rolls and friendly service.
- Louie's Backyard: An upscale dining experience with stunning ocean views. Louie's is perfect for a romantic dinner or a special occasion.
- Sushi Street: A unique dining experience offering fresh sushi and Asian-inspired dishes in a casual setting.

# Events and Festivals

Key West hosts numerous LGBTQ+ events and festivals throughout the year, making it an exciting destination for visitors.

## Key Events

1. **Fantasy Fest:** Held in late October, this 10-day festival features parades, parties, and extravagant costumes. It's one of the largest celebrations of LGBTQ+ culture in the country.
2. **Pride Fest:** Usually held in June, Key West Pride celebrates the LGBTQ+ community with a variety of events, including a parade, parties, and live entertainment.
3. **Key West Women's Fest:** This annual event in September attracts women from all over, featuring parties, workshops, and entertainment.
4. **Key West Film Festival:** Celebrating independent cinema, this festival in November offers screenings, panels, and opportunities to meet filmmakers.
5. **Goombay Festival:** Celebrating Caribbean culture, this festival features live music, art, and food, and is a great opportunity to experience the island's diverse culture.

## Culture and History

Beyond its beaches and nightlife, Key West is rich in culture and history, offering plenty of activities for those interested in exploring the island's heritage.

## Historic Sites to Visit

- **Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum:** Visit the former residence of the famous author, complete with beautiful gardens and the six-toed cats that roam the property.
- **Key West Lighthouse and Keeper's Quarters Museum:** Climb the lighthouse for stunning views of the island and learn about its maritime history.
- **The Southernmost Point Buoy:** A popular photo spot, this iconic buoy marks the southernmost point in the continental U.S.
- **Old Town Trolley Tour:** A fun and informative way to see the island's historic sites, the trolley offers hop-on, hop-off access to various attractions.

# Tips for Visiting Key West

To ensure your trip goes smoothly, keep these tips in mind:

- Pack for the Weather: Key West has a tropical climate; lightweight clothing, sunscreen, and swimwear are essential.
- Rent a Bike or Scooter: The island is small and easy to navigate. Renting a bike or scooter is a great way to explore at your own pace.
- Stay Hydrated: The Florida sun can be intense. Drink plenty of water, especially if you're out on the beach or enjoying outdoor activities.
- Embrace the Local Culture: Key West is known for its laid-back vibe, so take your time and enjoy the unique atmosphere.
- Respect Local Customs: While Key West is very LGBTQ+-friendly, it's important to be respectful of the local community and culture.

## Conclusion

Key West is a vibrant and welcoming destination for LGBTQ+ travelers, offering an array of activities, events, and experiences that cater to every taste. With its stunning beaches, lively nightlife, and rich cultural history, it's no wonder that this charming island has become a favorite among the gay community. Whether you're looking to relax in the sun, dance the night away, or explore the island's unique heritage, Key West has something for everyone. So pack your bags, and get ready for an unforgettable adventure in this tropical paradise!

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What are the top gay-friendly accommodations in Key West?

Some of the top gay-friendly accommodations in Key West include The Island House, a popular clothing-optional resort, and The Equator Resort, known for its welcoming atmosphere and vibrant social scene.

### What are the must-visit gay bars in Key West?

Must-visit gay bars in Key West include Aqua Nightclub, known for its drag shows and lively atmosphere, and The Monster, which offers a fun environment with great drinks and entertainment.

### Are there any annual events in Key West that celebrate LGBTQ+ culture?

Yes, Key West hosts several annual events celebrating LGBTQ+ culture, including Fantasy Fest, a 10-

day costume festival, and Pride Fest, which features parades, parties, and various activities throughout the city.

## What activities are popular among the LGBTQ+ community in Key West?

Popular activities among the LGBTQ+ community in Key West include beach outings at Higgs Beach, water sports like snorkeling and diving, and enjoying sunset celebrations at Mallory Square.

## Is Key West an inclusive destination for LGBTQ+ travelers?

Yes, Key West is known for being an inclusive and welcoming destination for LGBTQ+ travelers, with a vibrant community, numerous gay-friendly establishments, and a reputation for celebrating diversity.

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