

**1 Section Summary**

A brief introduction to each region and its navigational characteristics.

**2 Land Boundary**

The Florida Keys are a series of islands. For example, your trip through the Upper Keys spans Key Largo to Long Key.

**3 Waterway Boundary**

Each section's NAV COLUMN begins and ends at a natural *marine* boundary. The Upper Keys are bounded by Angelfish Creek and Long Key Viaduct.

**4 Mileage Boundary**

Note the approximate length of a particular region by its mileage.

**5 Bridge Radio Watch**

Remember to hail opening bridges in Florida on VHF 09. Additionally, VHF 13 lets you eavesdrop on commercial traffic movement and alerts. The U.S. Coast Guard hails on VHF 16 and works on VHF 22A.

Waypoints and NOAA chart excerpts are shown for illustrative purposes only. They are not to be used for piloting or navigation.

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# The Upper Keys

2 Key Largo to Long Key  
 3 Angelfish Creek to Long Key Viaduct  
 4 ICW Statute Mile 1120.4 to 1177.8  
 5 Bridges Monitor VHF 09

**T**HE UPPER KEYS begin the 150-mile coral and limestone archipelago of the Florida Keys. Over 30 miles long, Key Largo, Spanish for Long Key, dominates the Upper Keys and is the largest island in the Florida Keys. Plantation Key, Windley Key, Upper Matecumbe Key, Lower Matecumbe Key (pronounced *MAT-an-um-buh*), and Long Key continue southwestward until Channel Five. With a 65-foot fixed bridge and 12- to 15-foot of water, Channel Five is one of two major crossovers between Hawk Channel and the ICW.

The Upper Keys are best known for the John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, known locally as "Pennekamp" (pronounced *PEH-nuh-kuh-amp*). Covering 75 square miles of the most extensive coral reef system in the United States, it is home to over 50 species of coral and nearly 500 species of fish. The park, accessible from several marinas and anchorages, provides glass-bottomed boat tours, dive and snorkel charters, and equipment rental.

Scores of free day-use moorings, maintained by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, (FKNMS) provide access to the reef. The vast majority of these moorings are located in the Upper Keys, including famous sites such as Carysfort Reef, Dry Rocks, Molasses Reef, Pickles Reef, Davis Reef, Hens and Chickens, Cheeca Rocks, and Alligator Reef.

**HAWK CHANNEL ROUTE**


As you transit Hawk Channel, the Florida reef first becomes noticeable along the Upper Keys. The skeleton towers of the reef lights are now visible on the horizon. The ocean breeze is fresh, but without the typical ocean chop or cross-seas. A long line of reefs protects this route from ocean swells.

The primary port along the HAWK CHANNEL ROUTE is Key Largo, in the protection of man-made canals or Largo Sound.

**ICW ROUTE**

The ICW ROUTE begins by crossing a series of sounds—Card Sound, Little Card Sound, Barnes Sound, Blackwater Sound, and Buttonwood Sound—linked by winding creeks. Near the end of Key Largo, the ICW opens into Florida Bay.

This route is a Thomas' English muffin of anchorages: scores of nooks and crannies lie between mangrove keys. We list over 60 anchorages along this 57-mile stretch.

 Never anchor on coral—it is illegal and damages the reef. To dive or snorkel the coral reefs, look ahead to the 41 Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary mooring sites detailed in this guide.

**MARINE FACILITIES**

There are nearly 40 marine facilities in the Upper Keys, most clustered near small crossovers between Florida Bay and the Atlantic. Private channels often mark the route to a facility, but many have shoal en-

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**Crossovers**  
 Martin D. Adams Waterway  
 Tavernier Creek  
 Snake Creek  
 Whale Harbor Channel  
 Indian Key Channel  
 Channel Five

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**Dead Reckoning Lights**  
 Carysfort Reef Light (HC)  
 Basin Hills Light 315H (HC)  
 Elbow Reef Light 6 (HC)  
 Mosquito Bank Light 35 (HC)  
 Molasses Reef Light 10 (HC)  
 Davis Reef Light 14 (HC) [DR Station]  
 Hens and Chickens Shoal Light 40 (HC)  
 Alligator Reef Light (HC)  
 Tennessee Reef Light (HC)

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**U.S. Coast Guard**  
 District Seven: 305/415-6800  
 Group Key West: 305/292-8727  
 Station Islamorada: 305/864-4404

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**Hospitals**  
 Mariner Hospital: 305/434-3000  
 Florida Keys Hyperbaric Center: 305/853-1603

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trances or lie beyond a bridge. Always confirm the appropriateness of a marine facility for your vessel's draft and height.



Four-eye butterflyfish

The state of Florida provides four overnight mooring sites: at Pennekamp CRSP (STM 1141.4 ICW), Lignumvitae Key State Park (STM 1164.0 ICW), Indian Key State Historical Site (STM 1165.1 HC), and Shell Key State Preserve (STM 1165.5 ICW).

Marine facilities in the Upper Keys were hard hit during the 2005 hurricane season. With damage from multiple named storms, the marina landscape changed significantly.

On the down side, many marina owners chose not to rebuild, cutting their losses and selling the waterfront property. Unfortunately for boaters, many of these sales translate into future condominium developments, rather than replacement marinas.

On the up side, many marinas took the influx of insurance money to spruce up facil-

**6 Section Highlights**

Consistent, quick reference and contact information for that region.

**7 Crossovers**

Identifies the region's *potential* channels to cross between routes.

**8 Dead Reckoning (DR) Lights**

Important high-visibility aids useful in identifying your position and piloting progress.

**9 U.S. Coast Guard**

Telephone numbers for the region's Coast Guard district, group, and station.

**10 Emergency Care**

Regional hospital, emergency room, or decompression center contact information.

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Key Largo to Long Key

UK-49

**SECTION INTRODUCTIONS**

Before you start ticking off the miles, a SECTION INTRODUCTION provides reference information and practical advice for each geographic area.

We begin with a SECTION SUMMARY describing regional characteristics and navigational concerns in more detail. Divided into high-level topics, read these summaries to get a sense of the Waterway's different experiences. Each SECTION SUMMARY ends with BOOK AND FILM PICKS, a collection of regional recommendations for your cruise.

The SECTION HIGHLIGHTS column contains consistent, quick access to crossover, Dead Reckoning (DR) Light, U.S. Coast Guard, and emergency care or safety information.