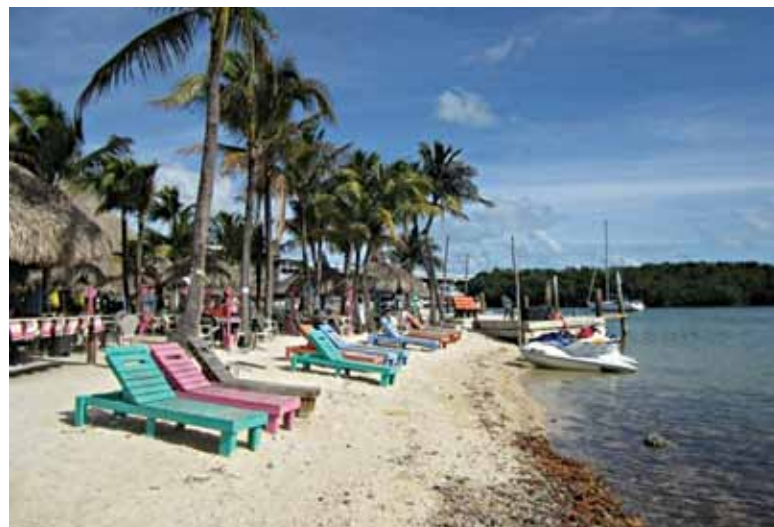


Florida Keys Beaches



Bahia Honda State Park.



Gilbert's Resort, Key Largo.



Anne's Beach, Islamorada.

It's summer! Time to beat the heat and laze at the beach!

UPPER KEYS

Gilbert's Resort

MM 107.9, Key Largo 305-451-1133. Small sandy beach, pool, tiki bar and restaurant.

John Pennekamp State Park

MM 102.5, Key Largo 305-451-1621. Beach, aquarium, boat rentals, diving and snorkeling trips available.

Harry Harris Park and Beach

MM 92.5, Tavernier 305-852-7161. Sandy beach, bathrooms, picnic areas, fishing and swimming.

Islamorada Founder's Park

MM 86.5. Beach & amenities. Includes pool, dog park, restrooms, and picnic benches.

Library Park and Beach

MM 81.5, behind the Islamorada Public Library. Playground equipment, picnic benches and sandy beach.

Matecumbe Public Beach

MM 73.5, Islamorada. Large stretch of beach for shallow swimming. No restrooms.

Anne's Beach

MM 72.5, Islamorada. Oceanfront nature boardwalk, picnic tables and bathroom.



At the annual Islamorada Chamber of Commerce's Island Fest in April, they sponsor a sand sculpting contest at Founders Park beach.



Beach at John Pennekamp State Park, Key Largo.

MIDDLE KEYS

Sombrero Beach

MM 50, Marathon 305-292-4650. This beachfront park is maintained by the city of Marathon. Covered picnic tables, playground, restrooms and protected cove for kids.

Little Duck Key Beach

MM 39, Marathon. Located just south of the 7 Mile Bridge. Restrooms and picnic areas.

LOWER KEYS

Bahia Honda State Park

MM 37, 305-872-2353. Named one of the top 10 beaches in North America.

KEY WEST

Higgs Memorial Beach

Near the south end of White Street. A pier, swimming, and free tennis courts across the street.

C.B. Harvey Rest Beach Park

Next to Higgs Beach. Beach is about 300 yards long and provides picnic areas.

Fort Zachary Taylor State Park

305-292-6713. What the locals voted "the best beach in Key West." Picnic, swim or fish.

Smathers Beach

Sandy beach, picnic, restroom, volleyball, and watersports.

South Beach

At the end of Duval Street. Beach, picnic tables and bathroom facilities.

Highway Robbery

Many local business owners are sweating bullets and it is not due to the summer heat. D-Hooker Restaurant was recently sold and the new manager came to work on June 18th to find 27 Department of Transportation officials loading up his business sign on a flatbed truck. He managed to get it returned, but his "Under New Ownership" banner was taken along with his expensive tiki torches and brightly colored welcome flags, and they are gone forever. Why?

Now that we are in the off season, every customer counts. Travelers have just a split second to see the signage as they travel our Overseas Highway searching for a place to eat, and a missing sign can cost the restaurant dearly in lost business. "I have 20 employees to worry about," said the manager. "What am I going to do?" He gave me a card that one of the men had left: Herman Villar, a Project Manager for Infrastructure Corporation of America. I gave him a call. Mr. Villar was very nice and explained that the company he worked for was contracted by the DOT and that D-Hooker's sign was within the "right of way." He said that the DOT sends the businesses many notices before they send his company out to confiscate signage. D-Hooker's manager said he never received any notices.

I decided to take a drive down US 1 and pay close attention to the signs. There are hundreds of signs and flags close to the highway, but I didn't notice any other businesses missing their signs, just the D-Hooker signs were gone. Why were they singled out?

I popped in to see Harriette Mattson at Harriette's Restaurant. She has been serving breakfast and lunch to hungry locals and tourists for 32 years at that location. Now the DOT wants to take away three of her prime parking spaces "because they are close to the road and could cause an accident" (although there has never ever been an accident there). A corner of Harriette's Restaurant is actually ON the DOT right of way. Do they plan to whack off that corner of the building? Harriette is afraid of them. "We are all struggling and don't have the money to fight them," she says. "It is the Mom and Pop places that give



Robby Majeska of Keys Kritters shows his five parking places he bought from the DOT for \$10,000.



Captain's Imports is feeling the pinch.



Harriette Mattson of Harriette's Restaurant in the corner of her restaurant that is on the DOT right of way.



D-Hooker's very nice, very expensive sign that almost got confiscated.



D-Hooker area in question.

the Keys its charm. People come here to get away from corporate America. There has to be a reasonable solution if they would only just work with us." Harriette's is a landmark. I hope I never see the day that they run off Harriette and a Waffle House or some other big corporate chain opens there.

Up the road I go to Keys Kritters, to visit the owner Robby Majeska. He has "NO PARKING" signs all over his parking lot. "Whats up with that?" I ask. Robby tells me that the DOT put them there and that he had to purchase 5 parking places within his own parking lot from the DOT at a cost of \$10,000! Isn't that extortion?

It seems that just some businesses are being singled out and not others. Some were afraid to talk to me for fear of being targeted themselves.

Wendy Hewitt, owner of Keys Castaways in the median at MM 98.7, said the DOT came by and said they were going to do some digging in front of her business. "I asked them for a map or a drawing of what they planned to do and they didn't have one. I told them to go away and come back when they had a diagram," she said, shaking her head. "This is getting crazy!"

It was lunchtime, so I drove by Sharkey's. I was hoping to catch a quick mouthwatering burger at the Galley but I couldn't find a close parking spot. It used to be you could just park along the street, but now there are NO PARKING signs there. For a community that depends on tourism, all these NO PARKING signs are not very welcoming.

Robby Majeska said that the DOT has a job to do, but we as business owners should speak up so that it is done as fairly as possible. Then he quoted a poem:

"In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up."

-- by Martin Niemöller, prominent German anti-Nazi theologian and Lutheran pastor.