

The Cats of Key West

Free-roaming cats live by their wits in this feline-friendly town.

By Chris Moore

The island of Key West's end-of-the-line geography makes it a catch-point for society's outsiders. Last in the chain of Florida's keys, Key West is closer to Havana than Miami and is famous for its tolerance of strays. The white clapboard Old Town district boasts bougainvillea and palm trees. Then there are the cats. Nearly every guest house, gallery and shop has been adopted by a cat or two that come by for handouts or haunt the dumpsters out back. Others panhandle the tourists at Old Town's open-air restaurants. You'd expect a cat at a raffish Duval Street saloon such as Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville or Sloppy Joe's, but even at the glitzy Westin hotel, enterprising cats will take empty chairs at the tables. They know when the cruise ships come in. Headquarters for one band of ferals is the old graveyard on Passover Lane, where one of the markers reads: "I told you I was sick!" e-roaming cats live by their wits in this feline-friendly town.

[Click here to read about the Hemingway House cats.](#)

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