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lessed with sensual balmy breezes, an average year-round temperature of 80 degrees Fahrenheit, and miles upon miles of beautiful beaches, Florida is a treasure trove of romantic enclaves. Little wonder the Sunshine State is the number one honeymoon destination in the U.S. Some visitors prefer the fast-paced beat of the state's southern communities; others prefer the quieter enchantment of the vintage towns in the north. The sleepy Keys in the southeast and hip, jumping Miami provide the perfect honeymoon contrast, as do sophisticated Sarasota and hot-to-trot Tampa on the west coast.

Too many choices? Not to worry: We've done the legwork for you. Here, a region-by-region insider's tour of this world-famous destination, with the accent on romance. Let the sunshine in!

**The Northwest** Nowhere in Florida is southern hospitality served up in more generous helpings than in the northernmost region of the state. And nowhere is the diversity of terrain and wildlife as varied. From the white-sand beaches of Pensacola on its westernmost tip to the towering oak and cypress trees of Tallahassee, Wakulla Springs, and Apalachicola National Forest, this is the postcard-perfect Florida—idyllic, enchanting, and oh-so-romantic. It's a slice of Florida quite apart from the action down south. A northwest Florida holiday will coax even the most ardent city dweller to let go of the stress and relax, southern-style.

For those whose idea of paradise comes with a waterfront view, the Emerald Coast towns of Destin and Fort Walton Beach are ideal. The Gulf of Mexico glistens as brightly as your new wedding bands. Fringed with palm trees, the 24-mile-long beachfront has more than 11,000 rooms, cottages, private houses, and hotels to offer. Choose one and you have the perfect vantage point from which to savor the view as the two of you share fresh-squeezed orange juice at sunrise from your veranda. And, at sunset, dine to the music of the lapping waves.

Be sure to budget time to experience the lovely town of Seaside—an 80-acre walking village of more than 300 pastel-hued cottages with white-picket fences and wide wrap-around porches. Once containing little more than sea oats and pine scrub, this tract of land was conceived and designed as the perfect, compact village, meant to pay homage to a simpler **Continued on page 302**

by **Judy Alexandra DiEdwardo**



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Pull up a chair on one of the Northwest coast's fab beaches; sail away on the Florida Gulf; Art Deco rules in South Beach; spectacular sunsets like these are a dime a dozen in the Sunshine State.



Flamingoes strut their stuff all over the state; Minnie and Mickey share a giggle at Walt Disney World in Orlando.

## Shine!

Continued from page 300

time. Today, award-winning restaurants, art galleries, boutiques, and year-round festivals make Seaside a great place to play, relax, or simply get lost.

Nearby Apalachicola National Forest is an ideal side trip, with its towering cypress trees and fragrant pine forest. Occupying more than a half-million acres to the south and west of Tallahassee, the park offers more than 60 miles of hiking, plus canoeing on the rivers and creeks that wind throughout this well-kept habitat. How about a tranquil picnic lunch for two as you canoe lazily down the Sopchoppy or Ochlockonee Rivers?

For those who thrive on more cerebral stimulation, the sights and sounds of Tallahassee are ideal for walking, shopping, and sightseeing through the state capital's rich cultural heritage and stunning landscapes of moss-draped live oaks and historic mansions. This is true vintage Florida, and if this strikes your romantic fancy, several other northern Gulf Coast towns are well worth a day trip or overnight stay. In the small towns hereabouts, doors remain unlocked, deals are sealed with a handshake, and live entertainment consists of porch-

side rocking-chair conversations with strangers who quickly become friends.

Follow the Georgia border west of Tallahassee in Gasden County to the former tobacco town of Havana, which has some of the largest concentrations of antiques shops in the state. Although the town's one-time chief industry is a thing of the past, preservationists have worked double-duty to restore Havana to its former charm.

The romanticism of the Old South comes to life most vividly in the nearby sleepy fishing village of Steinhatchee, located between Tallahassee and Gainesville, where modern cottages and inns showcase vintage 19th-century Florida architecture. This is *Gone With the Wind* country, where it shouldn't be too difficult to muster up your best imitation of Scarlett O'Hara while sipping sweetened iced tea from the deck of a wrap-around porch—an architectural feature that you'll be delighted to find on many of the town's bed and breakfasts and renovated cottages. Let him sweep you off your feet (again) for a "proper" afternoon of shopping in the nearby town of Micanopy, home of *The Yearling* author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Antiques aficionados, especially, will find plenty to get excited about.

### Where to Stay

**Seaside Cottage Rental Agency, Seaside.** Stay in a honeymoon cottage smack on the beach. Double room rates begin at \$249 per night. Call 800-277-8696.

**Wakulla Springs Lodge, Wakulla Springs.** The absence of televisions in this landmark lodge, situated in the Wakulla Springs Sanctuary, makes it a romantic spot. Double room rates begin at \$65 per night. Call 850-224-5950.

**Steinhatchee Landing, Steinhatchee.** This distinctive 25-acre resort, a recreated 1890s Victorian village, combines the ambience of the past with modern amenities. Double room rates begin at \$105 per night. Call 352-498-3513.

**Hurlong Mansion Bed and Breakfast, Micanopy.** Built in 1845, this two-story mid-Victorian house is surrounded by a lovely garden and statuesque oak and pecan trees. Choose from suites, rooms, or cottages. (Word to the wise: Call in advance for cottages; there are only two!) Double room rates begin at \$65 per night. Call 800-437-5664.

**The Northeast** This region of Florida is a lot like a multiplex movie theater marquee: There's something here for everyone. You'll find a high-energy pulse in Jacksonville, and laid-back sensibility on the remote beaches of Amelia Island and

Ponte Vedra Beach. Florida began in St. Augustine, a city steeped in history—it's the country's oldest town. Despite the divergence of these locales, they are threaded together by the Atlantic Ocean's hypnotic shoreline that has made this part of Florida a favored destination among sports enthusiasts and beach lovers alike.

Jacksonville is the golf-resort capital of the state; five top courses in the region feature some of Florida's most varied turf. From Amelia Island and Ponte Vedra Beach to Daytona Beach, the course names read like a Who's Who of golf-course designers and player tournaments. To golfers, this region is nothing short of nirvana.

Consider Amelia Island Florida's welcome mat—a beach town that's lovely, quaint and very inviting. First stop: Centre Street, the heart of it all. Located in Fernandina Beach's Historic District, this lovely street is chock full of turn-of-the-century brick buildings, grand homes, churches, cozy bed and breakfasts, and charming restaurants that reflect the town's Victorian heritage. Represented are a wide variety of architectural styles, including Queen Anne, Florida Vernacular, Italianate, and Chinese Chippendale.

When you reach the end of Centre Street, you'll find yourself facing the island's lovely marina, where shrimp boats dock. From here, day trips to St. Simons and Jekyll Islands or the Cumberland Island National Park can easily be arranged. Perhaps the prospect of just such a trip is the lure you need to get your own Tiger Woods off the links for an afternoon.

Interestingly, the population of Amelia Island is the youngest of any major Florida city; 33 is the median age. Translation: This is a happening place with plenty to explore during the day, and lots of options for nightlife.

Next up: Jacksonville. Nature lovers, or those who need a dose of green each day, should plan a visit to one of Jacksonville's biggest parks located on the western edge of town. Cary State Forest encompasses more than 3,000 acres, upon which there are plenty of great hiking trails to stretch your legs.

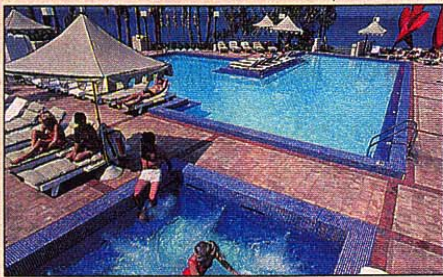
South of Jacksonville, the picturesque seaside town of Ponte Vedra Beach is probably best known for what it doesn't have: High-rise condos, traffic jams, and droves of sunburned tourists are conspicuously absent. Instead, the calling cards of this quiet, old-money community are its pristine beaches, world-class tennis, and, of course, championship golf.

Traveling south along the shimmering Florida coast, your **Continued on page 304**



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## Shine!

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next stop is St. Augustine. Stroll its cobblestone streets for a course in Florida History 101. While you could easily begin anywhere, we recommend starting with the town's most sensual attraction: the Fountain of Youth. Call it the ultimate water fountain. This 14-acre archeological park dates back to Ponce de Leon's reported 1513 landing in the New World—and alleged discovery of waters that, if sampled, promise eternal youth. (Be sure to test the water yourself, just in case he was right!)

### Where to Stay

**Ponte Vedra Inn and Club, Ponte Vedra.** Choose from among more than 200 lavishly decorated guest rooms and suites on the resort's sprawling 300-acre oceanfront campus—many with separate beach entrances. Be sure to visit the state-of-the-art spa and fitness facility as well as the Club's recently acquired sister property, The Lodge & Club at Ponte Vedra. Double room rates begin at \$170 per night. Call 800-234-7842.

**The Fairbanks House, Amelia Island.** This beautifully restored 19th-century Italian-style villa features eight guest rooms. They all have either four-poster or canopy beds—

and some have Jacuzzis. Double room rates begin at \$99 per night. Call 800-261-4838.

**Amelia Island Plantation, Amelia Island.** An expansive 1,250-acre beachfront resort with nature trails, bike paths, golf and tennis is a honeymooner's delight. It features 570 rooms, all of which have terraces, some of which have fireplaces and whirlpools. Double room rates begin at \$179 per night. Call 904-261-6161.

**Central East** If you honeymoon on this sliver of east-coast beach, it may not be your beloved who's making the earth move beneath your feet. This is NASA country—home to the Kennedy Space Center—where regularly scheduled shuttle launches can be viewed both day and night.

Sandwiched between the celebrated beaches of Daytona to the north and the orange groves and quiet communities of Port St. Lucie to the south, the so-called "Space Coast" towns of Titusville, Cocoa Beach, Melbourne, and Palm Bay lay claim to 72 miles of Florida's loveliest strands.

While there's more to the Space Coast than the Kennedy Space Center, it's a good place to start and shouldn't be missed—even if you promised not to be a tourist. As anyone who's witnessed a launch will tell

you, it is a true thrill. And depending on where you park, you can be as close as six miles from the pad! (That's pretty close considering that launches can be seen as far as a three hour's drive away.)

After you've toured the space center and maybe even seen (and felt) an actual launch, explore the 220-square mile Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and National Seashore, which contains a diverse range of habitats and more than 300 species of birds (some endangered), and 25 species of mammals. If it's too hot or rainy to hike, don't be embarrassed to take the auto trails and view the flora and fauna from the cool comfort of your car. This tranquil sanctuary is also one of the best spots for a romantic afternoon picnic in the park. Or take to the beach where balmy breezes, lush swaying palms and the sound of gentle waves hitting the shore will make you glad you chose to honeymoon in this idyllic east-coast enclave.

Located at the southernmost point of the seashore is the four-mile-long Playalinda Beach, where towering dunes slope gently into a wide, pitched beach. The calming panorama this creates is also a great vantage point from which to view a shuttle launch.

If all of this nature and solitude becomes unbearable, Orlando's **Continued on page 306**

# Walk down an aisle that's 23 miles wide.



Your wedding location should be as vast and beautiful as your future together. You'll find the sandy shores of the Daytona Beach area ideal for a special, romantic ceremony you'll always remember. And since your financial commitment shouldn't compete with your emotional one, Daytona Beach offers you great value, too. As for your honeymoon, well, you're already there. We have hundreds of fun things for the two of you to see and do. For a free Visitors Guide, contact us at:



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## Shine!

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Walt Disney World Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park, Universal Studios Florida, and Sea World are just an hour away, providing you and your new hubby the perfect contrast to an otherwise tranquil respite.

If you decide to pass on Orlando, you'll probably have a few extra days to play in the region. We recommend continuing south to the Treasure Coast town of Sebastian. Although mostly residential, this citrus-producing community is prized for its fishing and, of course, beautiful beaches and parks. Even Florida natives consider the silky sand here breathtaking.

Continue on to the upscale resort community of Vero Beach. As private as this remote Indian River County town tries to be, the rolling dunes of its white-sand beaches are irresistible beacons to visitors. Treasure seekers won't be able to resist donning mask and fins and searching the shallow waters for the legendary Spanish wrecks often found in these azure waters.

### Where to Stay

**Indian River Plantation Marriott Resort, Hutchinson Island.** This 200-acre island

resort has luxury rooms and one- and two-bedroom oceanfront suites and villas with fully-equipped kitchens and private balconies. Double room rates begin at \$109 per night. Call 800-775-5926.

**Double Tree Guest Suites, Vero Beach.** One of the area's best accommodations, this Mediterranean-style, all-suite, four-story hotel is a beach lover's dream. Spacious terraces provide great views of the Atlantic. Double room rates begin at \$205 per night. Call 800-841-5666.

**Central** Look no further than Walt Disney World's cheerful cadre of wedding and honeymoon organizers to flawlessly choreograph each and every detail of your special day, or to plan an unforgettably romantic honeymoon getaway. "Intimate Weddings" and "Fairy Tale Honeymoons" are two of the latest Disney offerings for couples looking to enjoy one of the most enchanting wedding and honeymoon destinations in the world. With three top-flight entertainment parks set on 43 square miles of lush tropical countryside, it's easy to see why this Lake Buena Vista landmark has become a favorite among newlyweds.

All-inclusive packages feature a variety of amenities and services, including access

to private beaches, luxurious accommodations, and plenty of intimate, candlelit tables for two. "Intimate Wedding" packages begin at \$3,300; "Fairy Tale Honeymoon" packages begin at \$884. Call 407-828-3400.

Adding to the excitement of Magic Kingdom, Epcot, and Disney-MGM Studios, the new Disney Institute is a world unto itself. Located on Disney grounds, the Institute's studios and facilities are connected by tree-lined gardens and walkways that wind around charming bungalows and townhouses. The campus-style lakeside resort features live entertainment and educational programs—in addition to tennis courts, a championship golf course, and outdoor swimming pools. Try your hand at everything from cartoon animation and gourmet cooking to rock climbing and topiary design. For something less cerebral, the resort has its own state-of-the-art sports and fitness center and spa.

If Mickey and all his Disney Friends are the only images that come to mind when you think of Florida's central region, be aware that there are other reasons to visit this thriving city—the new, \$44 million, 200,000-square-foot Orlando Science Center, for one. Considered one of the country's top science centers, it features a planetarium, simulated

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earthquake exhibit, and spectacular 3-D laser light shows.

And when you've exhausted the theme parks and Orlando itself, you're in for a delightful surprise. Gas up the rental car, pack up the picnic basket and head north to Ocala—just 75 miles from Orlando but a world apart; this is one of the prettiest rural communities in the Sunshine State. And the grass isn't the only thing that's green: There's serious money here, in one of the nation's prime thoroughbred horse-breeding areas. Ocala-based breeders include the owners or heirs of the 3M, Honeywell, Ocean Spray, and Campbell Soup fortunes.

If you find you want to saddle up and ride, several local ranches will be happy to oblige you. Not only is a ranch visit a terrific way to see Ocala's rich farmlands, but it's also a fabulous introduction for first-time riders—and a memorable adventure for seasoned equestrians, as well.

The rural beauty of Central Florida is a pretty well-kept secret, one you'll be glad you found out. The region has dozens of state parks and more than 1,200 lakes for swimming, boating, and fishing. Within the Ocala National Forest alone—the oldest national forest east of the Mississippi—there are 36,000 acres of spring-fed lakes. There's a

bit of Hollywood history here as well. Six original Tarzan episodes were shot at nearby Silver Springs in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as *The Yearling*, scenes from *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, and more than 100 episodes of the television series *Sea Hunt*.

If you're looking to play a little Tarzan and Jane on your own, we have two recommendations: Picturesque Alexander Springs has the greatest flow of any natural spring on U.S. Government land, forming one very large, deep pool that's open to swimmers, snorkelers, and divers. As with all of Florida's springs, the year-round, 72-degree-Fahrenheit water is always refreshing—and the perfect prelude to a picnic for two. There aren't many vines to swing on, but you may find an old tire or rope swing that works just as well. Nearby Juniper Springs is one of the best-known national forest recreation areas in the eastern U.S. Built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps, its headspring pool has always been a popular place to swim and snorkel, and its camping areas accommodate everything from tents to motor homes.

This is also one of the area's finest places for canoeing and kayaking. The seven-mile canoe trail formed by Juniper Springs and nearby Fern Hammock Springs is one of the clearest in Florida. And the scenery can't be

beat! The spring-fed stream flows through rare semitropical wilderness not found in any other national forest in the Continental U.S. Tarzan wannabes, listen up: Heed the 'No Swimming' sign on this part of the river, where wild and dense vegetation create the perfect habitat for snakes and alligators.

To make your emergence back to civilization a gentle one, visit the town of Cassadega—a weird and wonderful psychic's town and major tourist attraction for those who yearn for a glimpse at the future. A very pretty hour-long ride west of Daytona, fortune tellers, card readers and mystics live and work here—and are quite eager to read everything from the palms of your hands to the tea leaves in your cup.

If dabbling in the occult isn't your idea of fun, nearby Mount Dora beckons guests with more earthly entertainment. With a population of nearly 8,000, 19th-century clapboard homes, and a white-brick city hall that looks like Tara in *Gone With the Wind*, the town is a veritable step back in time. Antiques shops line both sides of the main street, where you'll find everything from colorful Fiesta dishes to oak hutches and majestic grandfather clocks.

More of central Florida's rolling hills are found south of Mount **Continued on page 308**

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## Shine!

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Dora heading toward the tiny town of Lake Wales and nearby Bok Tower Gardens. This is the highest point in Central Florida and features more than 100 acres of landscaped gardens and a giant stone Carillon bell tower that rings on the half hour.

Lake Wales is also home to one of Florida's least-publicized tourist attractions. It may not be as thrilling as a theme park ride, but Spook Hill is a bonafide phenomenon. It works like this: You drive your car to a marked line in the street, shift into neutral, and watch your car roll several hundred feet uphill. At least that's how it appears. A sign posted nearby says the spot is haunted by the spirit of an Indian chief. Others claim it's just an optical illusion. You be the judge.

### Where to Stay

**Disney's Grand Floridian Resort and Spa, Lake Buena Vista.** Among the very best of Disney hotels, this elaborate Victorian-style resort features everything you would expect of a Disney property—from its stunning lobby and full-service spa to its private beaches and world-class tennis courts. Double room rates begin at \$284 per night. Call 407-824-3000.

**The Disney Institute, Lake Buena Vista.** A unique Disney concept in that you can choose from a variety of classes and workshops—rock climbing, cooking romantic dinners, animation, to name just a few. Stay in townhouses and bungalows. Double room rates begin at \$499 for a three-night minimum stay. Call 800-282-9282.

**Chalet Suzanne Restaurant & Country Inn, Lake Wales.** A storybook 30-room country inn trimmed with gingerbread accents and dreamy views of the lake, rose garden, and manicured courtyard. Double room rates begin at \$135 per night. Call 800-433-6011.

**Central West** Built on bluffs midway along Florida's west coast, the town of Clearwater stands vigil over the Intracoastal Waterway and the Gulf of Mexico like a sentry guarding a prized palace. The beaches alone are considered some of the best in the country: They have the awards to prove it.

With its warm waters, gentle waves, and remote expanses of waterfront, Clearwater is one of Florida's preferred vacation spots among honeymooners. From building elaborate sand castles to enjoying a candlelight dinner or moonlight strolls along the beach, this is the place to be in love—or, indeed, to fall in love all over again.

Sailing, windsurfing, and fishing are as readily available as volleyball, rollerblading. What's truly spectacular: the west coast's sunsets over the Gulf of Mexico. While Key Westers celebrate the sunset at Mallory Square, Clearwater beachers do it at Pier 60. The nightly party begins two hours before sunset and lasts for two hours afterwards, transforming the waterfront into a street festival. Local artists sell their wares while street jugglers, clowns, and magicians perform.

As for more serious nightlife, you're better off setting up camp in nearby Tampa. But before you jump headlong into this very international city, take a side trip to one of the west coast's lesser-known enclaves: Ybor City. With its historic buildings, antique streetlamps and wrought-iron balconies that frame Spanish architecture, this 110-block collection of bustling cafés and nightclubs looks like a Hollywood set. The story line? A steamy romance between two Latin lovers who have escaped to this tropical Casablanca to live out a fairy tale.

If you've had enough fantasy for one honeymoon, and sun and surf is all you're really after, pack up the tango CDs and head

directly to St. Petersburg. This seaside town—says the *Guinness Book of World Records*—holds the record for the longest run of consecutive sunny days (768 days from February 9, 1967, to March 17, 1969). When you tire of lying in the sand, reapply your sunscreen and take a hike: St. Petersburg is blessed with some of the west coast's longest expanses of walkable beachfront. And as day turns to night, you and your love can stroll along the shoreline beneath a shroud of stars accompanied by the sound of the gentle surf.

If you've decided to stay in St. Pete for a while and you're looking for a great day trip, head to Weeki Wachee Springs to see its legendary mermaids. The springs were first popularized by an ex-navy frogman who purchased the spring here, built the first underwater theatre, and, in 1947, presented the first live, underwater mermaid show to the public.

Travel south of here to the affluent town of Sarasota—a cultural mecca and haven for artists, musicians, composers, and writers, as well as arts patrons. If you enjoyed Tampa, you'll adore **Continued on page 310**

## Go Wild! Marco Island

Marco Island, the largest inhabited isle of Florida's Ten Thousand Islands, takes creature comforts to new levels—honeymooners are offered pampering amenities in posh resorts, and the wildlife creatures that roam the island live comfortably in a non-threatening natural habitat. This sequestered natural sanctuary is home to 200 species of birds, as well as manatees, alligators, turtles, and dolphins. And the Marriott's Marco Island Resort and Golf Club—a resort so dedicated to animals that the ground lighting is turned off at night, to ensure that the newborn sea turtles head for the moonlit Gulf of Mexico instead of a glowing swimming pool—gives their guests ample opportunities to get up close and personal with the critters.

Sail on one of the hotel's catamarans, with playful dolphins in tow, to a remote barrier island where Captain Jerry will point out all the choice shells.

How about a Wild-Kingdom-esque adventure during which you may even come face to face with an alligator or two. Take one of Captain Doug House's private airboat tours and he'll slow down the boat just long enough for you to get a good look

at one of the gators—keep your hands in the boat, please! Then it's "see ya later alligator" as he re-starts the engine and glides the two of you through tall grass and mangrove trees. Cost: \$30 per person. Call 941-695-4400.

For those of you craving the company of a kinder, gentler animal, there's the manatee. These mild-mannered mammals love brackish water, so take a bike ride around the canals—Scott Drive and Inlet Drive are favorite watering holes for the lumbering gray mammals. If you're a bird watcher, spread your wings and head to Briggs Nature Center where you two lovebirds can observe Bald Eagles, hawks, and osprey in the wild. Cost: \$3 per person. Call 941-775-8569.

As for your love nest, the Marriott's tropically decorated guest rooms with private balconies beckon. The "Champagne and Shelling Romance Package" (\$208 per night per couple) includes a shelling trip, picnic lunch, bottle of champagne, unlimited bicycle usage, two hours of tennis or miniature golf, a candlelight dinner, and daily breakfast. Call 800-GET-HERE. —*Andrea Dawn Clark*

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## Shine!

Continued from page 308

Sarasota. High-brow travelers will fall in love with the Downtown Cultural District, which contains the Sarasota Opera House, Sarasota Ballet, and numerous theaters and nightclubs—all within walking distance of excellent restaurants and superb art galleries. On the bayfront, the city marina bustles day and night with dinner cruises and charter boats. As for Sarasota's nightlife, there's something for every musical taste, with clubs showcasing jazz, blues, Top 40, reggae, and cabaret.

If your groom is pining for a golf course, let him loose on Sarasota where two dozen exquisite courses host major golf tournaments each year. This might be a good time to dust off that tennis racquet in the attic: Sarasota has a number of fabulous courts that are available for day and night play. At day's end, relax with a gourmet meal at one of the many celebrated waterfront restaurants here. Then, slip off your shoes for a moonlit walk back to your hotel.

Swimming, beach combing, and sun worshipping are all considered legitimate sports in Sarasota County. Boating or fishing anywhere along the Gulf of Mexico is divine,

but here in Sarasota it's especially lovely, particularly on the beautifully manicured waterfront and exclusive marinas.

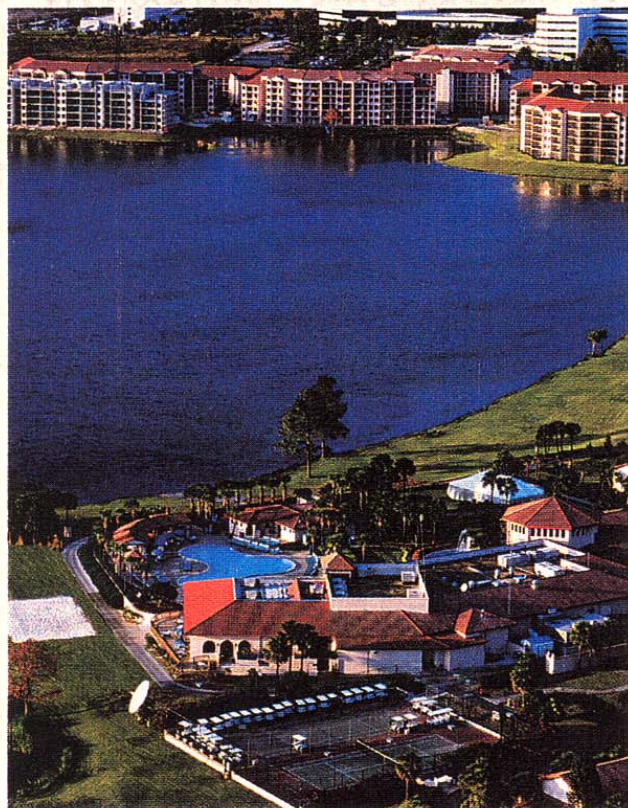
### Where to Stay

**Don CeSar Beach Resort & Spa, St. Petersburg Beach.** Florida's legendary Pink Palace is also one of the west coast's most well respected among full-service beachside resorts. Double room rates begin at \$215 per night. Call 800-282-1116.

**Saddlebrook Resort, Wesley Chapel.** Enjoy five hundred deliciously manicured acres of lush bliss that are home to the world-renowned Harry Hopman Tennis Program, the Arnold Palmer Golf Academy, and a 7,000-square-foot spa that is sure to earn Saddlebrook top billing among the most discriminating spa goers. Double room rates begin at \$149 per night. Call 800-729-8383.

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ing, swimming, golf, and tennis—these islands accommodate the full spectrum.

Just a short scenic drive across the Sanibel Causeway from Fort Myers, the beauty and serenity of Sanibel form a sand-and-sea sanctuary. Here, the gentle surf and creamy white beaches offer a hypnotic respite. Inextricably bound together by man and nature, these idyllic and remote islands epitomize the lure of the tropics. The mere fact that biking is the preferred means of transportation on both islands says a lot about the quality and pace of life here.

About 12 miles long and three miles wide, Sanibel is connected to the mainland by a bridge at its western tip. A stroll down Sanibel's Periwinkle Way ("Main Street") is your first clue that you have indeed arrived in paradise: Canopies of palms and lush foliage frame the street, and tucked along the way is a variety of shops, galleries, and restaurants. The beaches are rimmed with hotels large and small, as well as condominiums and private homes.

Considered one of the three best shelling beaches in the world, Sanibel is home to more than 160 different kinds of shells. Tiny coquinas, conchs, scallops and clams, whelks, buttercups, and cockles are some of the varieties you'll find just walking the

beach. More exotic finds are possible by deep wading or snorkeling.

For the adventurer, there's plenty to explore: At the tip of Sanibel Island is the quaint Sanibel Lighthouse, in operation since 1884. A small fishing pier invites a steady stream of anglers who test their luck around these waters. Located on the north side of the island and encompassing more than 5,000 acres of wetlands is the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. In addition to being a scenic drive, the refuge offers canoe tours as well as walking and biking trails to take in the island's plant and animal life—including more than 200 species of birds.

At the northern tip of Sanibel is a short bridge connecting it to Captiva, where brilliant white beaches seem to stretch forever and the sky meets the water in a blinding rush of blues. Captiva—nearly six miles long and narrower than Sanibel—is the more secluded of the two islands and the homes built here are set back from the road down long winding drives that look more like nature trails than driveways. Tall, shady Australian pines and luxuriant vegetation give this tiny island its tropical feel.

For those who crave the privacy afforded by less traveled destinations but don't want

to stray too far from the manicurist's chair, Naples is ideal. Located just south of Ft. Myers, this one-time fishing village has blossomed into one of the coast's most upscale and chic seaside towns for art, culture, music and, of course, shopping. By day, you can practice your wave runner skills, enjoy a gourmet lunch at a waterfront bistro wearing nothing more than a bathing suit, and take in a relaxing afternoon of European spa services. Follow it all up with an evening of dining and dancing in five-star style.

Naples is considered by some to be the Palm Beach of the west coast. Its quiet sophistication and charming ambience has attracted an interesting assortment of international residents and visitors—all of whom claim they've discovered the ultimate Florida retreat. Perhaps they're right.

#### Where To Stay

**Song of the Sea, Sanibel Island.** A European-styled seaside inn, this is considered one of Sanibel's most intimate places to stay. Thirty beautifully decorated, self-contained efficiencies offer both privacy and romance. Double room rates begin at \$160 per night. Call 800-231-1045.

**Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa, Fort Myers.** Known for its dining, tennis, and spa and recreational facilities, **Continued on page 312**



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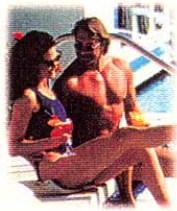
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## Shine!

Continued from page 311

this landmark resort is a local favorite, offering one of the area's most complete packages. Double room rates begin at \$130 per night. Call 800-767-7777.

**South Seas Plantation Resort & Yacht Harbour, Captiva Island.** A world unto itself, this 330-acre beachfront resort is one of the area's largest, with 600 rooms, suites, and efficiencies, as well as 11 intimate cottages/villas—some with whirlpools and fireplaces—all within a short walk of Captiva's beaches. Double room rates begin at \$110 per night. Call 800-237-3102.

**La Playa Beach Resort, Naples.** Located on the beach with rooms overlooking the Gulf, this very intimate resort hotel is a great deal. Double room rates begin at \$130 per night. Call 941-597-3123.

**Southeast** From posh Palm Beach to laid-back Key West, this prized stretch of tropical coastline plays host to the full breadth of entertainment, sightseeing, and activities that makes South Florida an ideal destination for honeymoon travelers.

Start with the 14-mile-long strip of stellar beaches and world-class shopping in Palm Beach. More than the lavish parties and the ornate buildings that give Palm Beach its signature look, this legendary island's history is rooted in its people. They are the industrialists and the socialites, the civic leaders and the cultural mavens, people dedicated to keeping alive the notion that Palm Beach is like nowhere else in the world. From Hollywood honchos and heads of state to literary and artistic icons and the quieter realm of old money and international business, the allure of this lush, emerald escape is irresistible. Then again, Palm Beach's affinity for beckoning a stellar cast is a genetic certainty. Henry Flagler wanted it that way from the moment his rickety wooden bridge connected this overgrown jungle island to the mainland—and the world. After the first mansions were built, Tiffany's wasn't far behind. And Donald Trump: This is where you'll find his over-the-top Mar-a-Lago mansion.

Even if you visit during the off-season, when residents head north to Martha's Vineyard, Newport, and Bar Harbor, you're still likely to see more Bentleys and Porsches along Royal Poinciana Way than you would on a trip to Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills.

If you thought Mar-a-Lago was breathtaking, wait until you see some of the other less famous mansions and sprawling estates. To check things out without actually stalking, rent a bicycle and pedal along the Island bike trail that winds its way north along the Intracoastal past the backyards of waterfront estates and then along the Atlantic Ocean. You'll feel as though you're eavesdropping even though such close proximity is perfectly legit.

And then there's Worth Avenue, home to the world's best in everything, from million-dollar jewelry and art to linens that cost as much as your rent, to haute couture that most people can only afford to gawk at. Don't be afraid to step inside even if an impulse buying spree isn't part of your wedding budget. Retailers have to assume that everyone's a billionaire and tend to treat patrons equally. You never know, you might want to splurge. If not, you'd be surprised at the things you can pick up for \$100.

Heading south along the coast, Palm Beach County is famous for its variety of little towns and sandy coves nestled along the coast road. If you've got the time, throw the map to the wind and let route A1A take you on a serendipitous field trip. The great advantage here is that you can explore the kind of off-the-beaten-track spots that aren't found on most maps. Be sure to slip into your swimwear before heading out. This is Florida, after all, and unless you're

coming straight from Worth Avenue, you'd be overdressed in anything else!

The next big adventure that's worthy of a day trip (or a few days if you have the time) is Miami. There are plenty of reasons to make the hour-long trek south from Palm Beach County. What you sacrifice in solitude you'll gain in excitement, starting with the historic Art Deco district of Miami Beach. This ultra-chic combination of beach and city is the beacon that draws throngs of movie stars, authors, models and, yes, tourists. Between the beautiful people and fabulous architecture, you could easily while away an entire day people-watching and strolling hand-in-hand.

Coconut Grove is another landmark Miami neighborhood that was once an enclave of vast, hidden estates and a haven for artists. It's still a great place for first-time visitors. But with Ocean Drive and South Beach still to be explored, we recommend taking in the full Miami scene before picking your favorite spot.

Ocean Drive and Lincoln Road are the two main drags that are best explored for the first time by day—on foot or by car—to get your bearings. When the sun goes down, Miami takes on an entirely different flavor. Now that you know your way around, you're ready to indulge in some of the country's hottest night life (much of which doesn't heat up until midnight).

But if the club scene isn't the kind of action you had in mind, a street-side dinner for two is your best bet. You'll feel like lovers on the shores of Madrid dining to the sounds of Latin music and the gentle surf. With the ocean on one side and your love on the other, the only thing you'll be pining away for is another night in this famous city.

Driving south from Miami along U.S. 1, the Keys arise out of a thin swath of limestone. With their perpetually nodding palms, shimmering beaches, and world-class coral reefs the Keys are a bit like nature's never-ending spring break. Here, the standard dress is a bathing suit, T-shirt, and shorts. So pop the top down on the convertible, turn up the volume on your favorite reggae CD, and prepare for the subtropical odyssey of a lifetime. Here we go!

Just south of Florida City is where the air begins to grow warm and salty, street lights disappear, and the intermittent glimpses of water from behind thick green mangroves turn to vast expanses of ocean and Gulf. The four-lane road narrows to two before the first of the pink and turquoise painted towns of the Upper Keys emerge—Key Largo, Islamorada, and Marathon. With Key West

and its legendary mile marker zero at the corner of Fleming and Whitehead Streets several hours' drive away, the temptation is to stop—just for the night. But as night turns to day, the tropical beauty of the Upper Keys' landscape proves too difficult to ignore, es-

**Between the beautiful  
people and fabulous  
architecture, you could  
easily while away  
an entire day people-  
watching and strolling.**

pecially when there's so much to see and do. The verdict? First stop, Key Largo—where Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall battled both Edward G. Robinson and a hurricane in the movie of the same name. However, contrary to myth, only a few of the movie's interior scenes were filmed here. Those famous scenes were shot in the Caribbean Club Bar, now a popular bayside tavern and colorful bikers' hangout, at mile marker 104.

But Key Largo's true renown is found deep below the azure waters that have earned the Keys a reputation as a world-class diving and snorkeling destination. Also here at the gateway to the Keys is the world's only underwater hotel. Guests of the Jules Verne Undersea Lodge can spend the evening amidst spectacular marine life while enjoying all the modern amenities. However, there is one hitch: Guests must scuba dive to their quarters.

Farther south, Islamorada is the "Sportfishing Capital of the World," heralded for the Keys' largest fleet of offshore charter boats and shallow water backcountry boats. Sailfish, marlin, dolphin (the fish, not the mammal), kingfish, snapper, and grouper are a few of the varieties of fish indigenous to Islamorada's waters.

The Keys' next signature attraction is hard to miss, and is a phenomenal sight to behold. The historic Seven Mile Bridge connects Marathon to its neighbors to the south. Actually 6.9 miles in length, the bridge is a striking reminder of Henry Flagler's railroad that once went all the way to Key West before being destroyed by a hurricane.

Considered the heart of the Florida Keys, Marathon was once a favored spot for pirates who were lured to the island by its swaying palms—and the **Continued on page 314**



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## Shine!

Continued from page 313

refuge they offered. Naturalists will find much to explore on Marathon. The Dolphin Research Center was once the site of Flipper's Sea School and where the movie *Flipper* was shot. Today, guests can tour the center and learn about the fascinating marine studies being conducted there.

The directions to Key West from here couldn't be simpler: Continue south until you run out of road—literally. The next piece of real estate is Cuba. If you arrive before sunset, head directly down Duval Street to Mallory Square. Park the car and follow the crowds onto the pier for a front-row seat at the best-looking sunset this side of the Rockies. Missing a Key West sunset is practically sacrilegious. The throngs of musicians, street performers, and visitors who gather each night are testimony to this enduring ceremony that's been happening since tourism first came to town. Despite the crowds, there is something very romantic about the scene. Amid the shrill sound of soaring herons weaving across the pastel sky, and the music of Key West's signature bagpipers playing "Amazing Grace", lovers hold one another close as day turns to night and another brilliant sun sinks

into the shimmering blue water. Key Westers give it a standing ovation as it disappears behind the horizon.

### Where To Stay

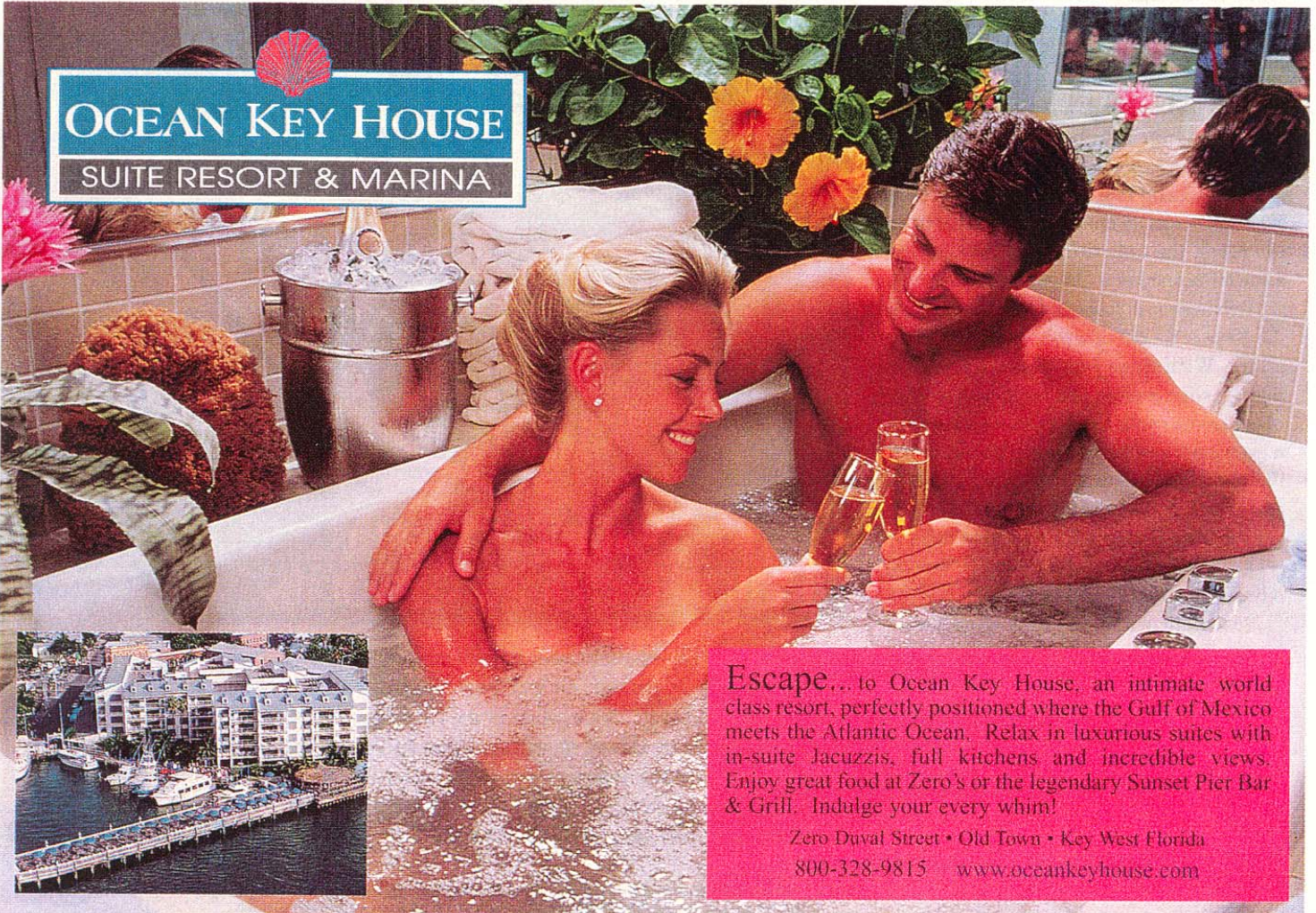
**The Breakers, Palm Beach.** Situated on 140 acres of prime beachfront real estate in the heart of Palm Beach, this 70-year-old historic landmark resort delivers a bird's eye view of the lifestyles of the rich and famous. It features 572 lavishly decorated rooms and suites—half of which overlook the beach and ocean, plus a fitness center, a spa, golf, and tennis. Double room rates begin at \$140 per night. Call 888-BREAKERS.

**PGA National Resort & Spa, Palm Beach Gardens.** This massive resort features sprawling landscapes and 339 beautifully designed guest rooms and suites, plus a world-class fitness center and spa. (Don't forget your map when you leave the lobby. The place is enormous.) Double room rates begin at \$109 per night. Call 800-633-9150.

**Boca Raton Resort & Club, Boca Raton.** Once a favorite refuge for winter-weary northerners, the Cloisters, as it was formerly called, pioneered the Spanish-Moorish style of many of Florida's grand hotels. Today, this posh 350-acre resort hosts a similar clientele who come in search of a luxury getaway that's elegant but not intimidating. **Continued on page 321**

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Suite Romance package features include: One bedroom honeymoon suite, breakfast in bed on morning of choice, Walt Disney World multi-day theme park admissions, welcome cocktail, deluxe fruit basket with bottle of champagne, souvenir Hotel Royal Plaza golf shirts, his/her bathrobes.

6 days/5 nights from \$1,625 seasonal

Super Suite Romance package features include: One bedroom honeymoon suite, breakfast in bed on morning of choice, Walt Disney World multi-day theme park admissions, welcome cocktail, deluxe fruit basket with bottle of champagne, souvenir Hotel Royal Plaza golf shirts, his/her bathrobes, Dollar Rent A Car convertible for five days.

#### SUMMERFIELD SUITES HOTELS

Orlando

800 reservations # 800-830-4964/Hotel phone # 407-352-2400/407-238-0777

Rates per couple

Effective dates: 1/3 - 4/3/98, 4/18 - 6/19/97, 8/22 - 12/23/98

5 days/4 nights \$1,349

8 days/7 nights \$2,049

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Honeymoon Package features include: 4-night package—Accommodations in a deluxe one-bedroom suite, Walt Disney World "All in One" pass, one day admission to Universal Studios Florida, admission and dinner at Wild Bill's Dinner Theater, one day admission at your choice of Pleasure Island or River Country, free mid-sized four-door car for entire stay (car tax and any upgrade not included), champagne and fruit basket in suite upon arrival, hotel taxes. 7-night package—All above plus seven day unlimited admission to Disney's Blizzard Beach, Typhoon Lagoon, River Country, Pleasure Island and Discovery Island, one day admission to Sea World Florida, VIP admission and dinner at Planet Hollywood Orlando (dinner based on \$20 per adult—no waiting in line!), 7-night package does not include admission and dinner at Wild Bill's Dinner Theater.

**All package features and rates are applicable at time of printing and are subject to change without notice. Unless mentioned otherwise, rates listed are per couple and do not include airfare, airport transfers, gratuities and taxes. Your professional travel agent can supply you with the most favorable airfares. Rates and packages for other periods are available upon request from each resort. Not responsible for typographical errors.**

## Shine!

Continued from page 314

Double room rates begin at \$130 per night. Call 800-327-0101.

**Hawk's Cay Resort and Marina, Duck Key.** Although best known as a family place, this 176-room West Indies-style resort offers intimacy as well. Located on a private 60-acre island, the resort also has a dolphin research center and daily dolphin shows. Double room rates begin at \$150 per night. Call 800-826-4061.

**Pier House and Caribbean Spa, Key West.** Elegant yet comfortable, this romantic landmark resort is located in the quieter part of town, yet is still accessible to everything. Double room rates begin at \$195 per night. Call 305-296-4600. ■

## Southeast Specialties: Miami and Key West

He craves laid back, you dream about hip shopping and hot nightlife. Rest assured you can have both without traveling to the ends of the earth. Create the ideal compromise honeymoon by spending a few days in action-packed Miami and then hitting kick-back Key West. It's easy.

Start (for argument's sake—you can do this in either order) in Miami, with a stay at the Sheraton Bal Harbour Beach Resort. Why here? Three reasons: A recent \$12 million renovation has this beachfront property looking more like a Caribbean resort than a typical high-rise hotel—inside and out; fab shopping directly across the street at the Bal Harbour shops (we're talking Neiman Marcus, Gucci, Chanel, and Versace); and quick-cab-ride proximity to Miami's South Beach, where the beautiful people hang out and the trendy nightclubs are. Convinced? Good.

Next, pack your shopping bags and board the plane for the 30-minute hop (you could opt to drive the scenic 159 miles) to Key West, home of the sunset celebration. Check into the Sheraton Key West on Smathers Beach, Key West's longest strand. Note: Save your tony Bal Harbour fashion purchases for back home; all you'll need on this casual isle are shorts, swim-suits, and sandals. This is one of the reasons some visitors kiss their ties and suits goodbye and never return home.

Cultural must-dos: Audubon House, a 19th-century home filled with period antiques and original engravings by famed naturalist John James Audubon (you can tour the gardens, too); the Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum (visit his writing studio and pet the many six-toed cats—descendants of Hemingway's very own kitties—that roam the property); and the southernmost point in the U.S.—Cuba is mere miles away.

Less cerebral activities: drinking and dancing at such famed spots as Sloppy Joe's (where Mr. Hemingway himself would imbibe as part of his daily ritual of writing, fishing, and drinking—not necessarily in that order). But save the true gustatory revelry for Alice's on Duval, a divine restaurant that serves such innovative "Floribbean" fare as vanilla pan-roasted chicken with Caribbean fruit glaze. Save room for the black-bottom key lime pie—it's a real winner.

At the Sheraton Key West, double room rates begin at \$119 per night. At the Sheraton Bal Harbour, double room rates begin at \$259 per night. To make reservations at either resort call 800-325-3535.—Denise Schipani