

ESCAPE



QUICK TRIPS

KEYLAXATION

Bungalows Key Largo offers a chic approach to all-inclusive

By Paul Rubio

Think all-inclusive resort, and Mexico or the Dominican Republic typically come to mind. But a new offering in Florida's Upper Keys is bringing Key Largo into the all-inclusive fold—in the best way possible.

Say hello to Bungalows Key Largo, an adults-only (21-plus) property that pairs the amenities of an exclusive island retreat with the laid-back lifestyle of the Florida Keys. Bungalows is a far cry from the low-brow, all-inclusive properties that have become synonymous with budget Caribbean travel. Rather, it's a detail-oriented escape with high-end amenities, top-shelf liquor, and personality-driven restaurants.

Located on the Keys' bayside just beyond Mile Marker 99, Bungalows is accessed from a small turn-off that weaves through dense-yet-manicured foliage. After valeting your own wheels, you'll be escorted on a pastel blue golf cart through the resort's matching blue wooden gates. Zigzagging along palm tree-laced trails, you'll cross paths with the Beach House, home to an array of restaurants, and a massive reclining Buddha

that underscores Bungalows' tranquility mantra. More vacation bliss awaits across a collection of 135 white-washed bungalows, each boasting modern furnishings and a private garden with an alfresco soaking tub and rain shower.

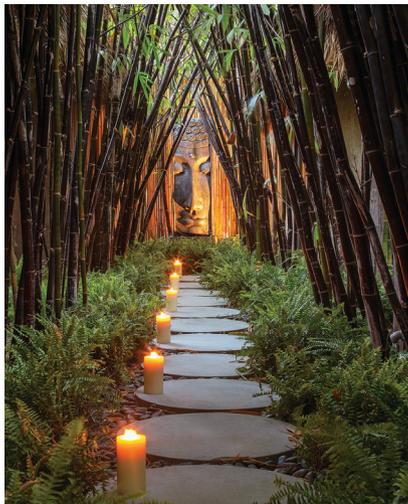
After settling into your romantic bungalow, it's time to explore an intoxicating world of fun-in-the-sun, designed to make you never ever want



THE ALFRESCO SOAKING TUB AND RAIN SHOWER.



KATIE SCHWEISS



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: THE WATERFRONT BUNGALOWS' PATIOS; THE SUNSET POOL; EXPLORE KEY LARGO BY KAYAK, PADDLEBOARD, OR BIKE; ENTRANCE TO THE ZEN GARDEN SPA.

to leave. Choose between two pool and Jacuzzi areas or a beachfront lounge to destress and work on your tan. The all-inclusive policy means there's no reason to decline another watermelon margarita while soaking, sunbathing, or enjoying live music sessions. Thematic eateries like toes-in-the-sand Mexican restaurant Sea Señor and Fish Tales—the design of which recalls Il Riccio on Capri—are idyllic for long, memorable meals and languid, cocktail-heavy days. Floating tiki boats head out twice daily for tours along the bay; you can also choose your own bay-side adventure via paddleboard, water trike, or kayak, admiring the setting while keeping an eye out for dolphins and manatees.

To counter the eating and drinking excess, consider a scenic ride on a beach cruiser (every bungalow comes with two) or get fit in the palapa-topped outdoor gym. Early risers can look forward to morning group yoga and fitness classes, which range from hatha and vinyasa to a sunrise stretch. Alternatively, treat yourself to a few hours—or more—in the Asian-themed spa. Relax to the sounds of the wind passing through the bamboo gardens, unwind with a eucalyptus steam, or detox in the Himalayan salt room before expert therapists put your body at ease.

Finally, should curiosity or the odd case of cabin fever push you beyond Bungalows' boundaries, the property provides complimentary transportation within a 5-mile radius. We wouldn't blame you for wanting to check out the superb snorkeling at nearby John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park or chartering a fishing boat to learn why this region lays claim to America's best sportfishing. But no matter how you choose to spend your days and nights at Bungalows Key Largo, you'll quickly fall for this harbinger of American all-inclusive chic and its unique marriage of unapologetic indulgence and Florida Keys-style relaxation. (bungalowskeylargo.com) <<