

Key West Trip 5/6/23-5/13/23

Key West Trip with Rob & Donna ~ 5/6/23-5/13/23

“The Road Less Traveled”

Saturday, 5/6/2023-We picked up Rob & Donna and left Marco Island around 9am. We had an easy ride down to the keys. On the way down we drove around Homestead and found **Schnebly Wineries**. It looks like a cool place, so we plan to stop here on our way back home in a week. We stopped at **Lorelei Restaurant** in Islamorada for a great lunch and then continued down to Key West. The Royal Poinciana trees are all in bloom. The weather is sunny and breezy. We stopped at Publix for some supplies then continued to the Banyan, our “little treehouse in paradise” We checked in, brought our bags up, and relaxed on the deck with a lovely bottle of Salesian Malbec that Rob brought. This is one of the wineries that we toured on our trip down to Argentina a few years back and this was our very favorite winery. After our wine, we took a walk down to Mallory Square for our first sunset of the trip. The actual sunset was not all that great, but it was a lovely night-warm and breezy, so we



went over to **Sunset Pier** and were pleasantly surprised to find the **Robert Albury Band** playing again. This was the same group we saw last year, and they were great again! Robert was born and raised in Key West along with his 12 brothers. His whole family is musical. After his set, we walked down Duval Street towards the crowds. Duval street was closed with a huge stage set up on the corner of Greene. There was an extremely loud band playing and the street was mobbed. We walked down to

Caroline street where it was not so loud. Our favorite street vender was there, so we all got chili dogs and sausages. On our way back to our condo, we came upon a wedding party at First Flight. It has been a very fun first day.

Sunday, 5/7/2023- We all enjoyed a very relaxing morning on the deck with coffee and breakfast. It is another beautiful day with a nice breeze. After breakfast we all walked down to First Watch for a few breakfast beers. Next, we strolled through Truman Annex admiring the beautiful architecture and landscaping.



We ended up at the **Green Parrot** where we enjoyed the music of **Cantini Band Hot Club Jazz**. They were fantastic! The band included a great lead guitar player, a cute violin player, a fantastic girl who played clarinet and saxophone and sang, and Bubba Low Notes on bass viola. We all really loved how eclectic they were. They played everything from blues to Brubeck, songs from the 30's and even finished off their set with music from Star Wars and the Cantina Band in the movie.

What a wonderful way to spend a Sunday afternoon...cool place, not too crowded, good beers,

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and even free popcorn. The band finished their set at 4pm and we walked back down to **First Flight** to catch their great Happy Hour with craft beers, wine, and delicious wings, fried ravioli, deviled eggs, and a cone of fries. Next, we walked over towards the waterfront and stopped by **The Chart Room** for a quick drink. It was so fun to finally be able to enjoy this rustic and famous bar, which is said to have been one of Jimmy buffet's favorite hangouts. We walked back over to **Sunset Pier** to hear

Robert Albury Band play again. It was now dark, and we were well hydrated, so we walked back home where we solved all the problems of the world.

Monday, 5/8/2023-It was another beautiful morning and we enjoyed breakfast on the deck overlooking the huge banyan tree. Rob & Donna went for a walk. While I was going through our calendar to set up the week, I checked out Schooner Wharf and found out that Michael McCloud, one of our favorite musicians, retired on 4/30/2023 and moved to Arizona after 40 years of playing music in Key West. What a bummer! When Rob & Donna returned, we walked down to get lunch tacos and empanadas from the new little storefront on Duval called **Kolache Café** and enjoyed them up on our deck with the appropriate adult beverages. Next, we walked down to



Schooner Wharf Bar where we enjoyed the music of **Raven Cooper**. She is another amazing performer who does everything from the classics to "What the fuck was I thinking?" and "Look out, Momma's got her boobies out". She is famous for doing one-woman duets where she sounds just like Johnny Cash and then sings in her higher voice. She can switch back and forth constantly. After Raven's set, we walked down the port to where we will take the boat to Dry Tortugas on Wednesday. We walked back up Caroline Street to check out Pepe's and decided that we will go there on Tuesday for their Happy Hour with oysters. We came



back home to get cleaned up for our nighttime outing to **Virgilio's for \$7 Martini Mondays**. Our bartender was Josephina, a lovely young lady from Argentina. She has

been in Key West for a few months and is already an expert at mixing all kinds of amazing martinis. I had an Italian Lemondrop Martini and then a Raspberry Chocolate Bomb. Eddie had an Espresso Martini and a Sour Apple Martini. Rob & Donna each had other delicious ones. We

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came back to the condo and cooked a pizza for dinner and had another bottle of Malbec. After dinner and solving all the problems of the world once again, we got to bed around 12:30.



Tuesday, 5/9/2023- This was another beautiful morning with a light breeze. We had planned to go to BO's Fish Wagon for breakfast, but we arrived at 10:35 and they had stopped breakfast at 10:30. The owner was very apologetic and asked us to please come back another day, which we agreed to do. Instead, we went down to **Harpoon Harry's** and had a great breakfast there, sitting outside to enjoy the breeze and people watching. Cindy got a delicious key lime pie French toast. We walked around more of the neighborhoods and stopped at **Books & Books**, where I was able to find some cute cat sitter books. We walked back to our condo for a little R&R.

One of the only bad things about our little treehouse is the 19 steps to climb to get up to it. By the end of a long night of drinking, they are pretty daunting! Rob, Donna, & Eddie went to the pool, and I relaxed in the AC and read. At 3pm, we walked down to First Legal Rum Distillery for free rum tasting and a mini lesson in making real Cuban Mojitos. We each had a nice Mojito, and they were really delicious. So, we bought some of their ingredients to try at home. This is really



a fun new place. We were not able to get on a rum tour today but will come back later for that. We walked over to **Pepe's** for Happy Hour of hand-squeezed Margaritas and 88 cent oysters, half price shrimp, and fish dip. All were delicious. We were surprised that the place was not more crowded with such a good deal. On the way back home, we stopped for a Key Lime Pie to enjoy later. After our dessert, we cleaned up and relaxed for an early night to bed as we must get up early tomorrow for our Dry Tortugas adventure.



Wednesday, 5/10/2023- We woke up to an alarm at 6am. We quickly got ready and had a quick cup of coffee before we walked down Caroline Street to the Ferry Terminal to board **Yankee Freedom** for our ride to **Dry Tortugas and Fort Jefferson**. It is another beautiful day with pretty calm seas. We were given a bagel for breakfast and could get coffee or juice. After a 2.5 hour very smooth trip, we arrived at Ft. Jefferson at 10:30am. At 11am. We took a free guided tour of the fort with our boat guide, Hollywood, who was super enthusiastic and knowledgeable about

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the history of the fort. We received a turkey or ham sandwich for lunch and then walked around a little including walking on the wall of the moat. Everyone had to get back on the boat by 2:45pm for our trip back to Key West. The bar had opened at 1pm, so we had a few “boat drinks” and some popcorn on the very smooth ride back. We arrived back in Key West at 5:30pm and went down to **El Maison de Pepe** for delicious Mojitos-\$18 each, but well worth it! After our libations, we went back to our little treehouse to cook a

lovely lasagna and salad for dinner.

Thursday, 5/11/2023-We awoke to another beautiful day with our breakfast on the deck. Today we all did a nice long walk, covering many of the areas that many tourists never see. We walked through **Blue Heaven** and shopped a little there at their great gift shop. We walked through **Ram’s Head Southernmost** and walked down to Southernmost Point where the tourists were lined up for photo opps at the famous buoy. We walked down to the corner of Vernon and Waddell Ave., where Jimmy buffet once lived in the second-floor apartment before he became famous. This is right next to dog beach and Louie’s Backyard, one of the premier restaurants in Key West for many years. Next, we went to **The Key West Butterfly and Nature Conservatory**.



This is such a lovely place, so quiet and relaxing with hundreds of butterflies flitting around, 2 beautiful pink flamingos, turtles, many beautiful small birds all in the truly magical surroundings of tropical plants. We walked back down Duval Street and stopped for a nice lunch at **Old Town Tavern & Beer Garden**. We did a little shopping before we went back home to rest up for our evening adventure. We enjoyed Happy Hour at the **Saint Hotel**, right around the corner from our place at 417 Eaton Street. Their happy Hour is from 4:17 to 7:14, and they serve the most interesting cocktail, each named for one of the 7 Deadly Sins. Very upscale! We stopped at **WineO, in the LaConcha Hotel**, for their Happy Hour \$5 wines. Just made it 2 minutes before Happy Hour ended. Then we began our long walk all the way over to **El Siboney** for the best Cuban food in Key West. We stopped along Duval at one of the many establishments that now legally sell marijuana and other things. Rob bought some gummies and Eddie bought some mushrooms. Our meal at El Siboney was delicious as ever, but I brought half of mine back home because the portions are so huge. They make excellent Sangria and the pork dinner, steak dinner, and fish dinners that we had were all excellent. I had wanted to go to the Little Room Jazz Club

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after dinner, but we walked back to the condo instead due to everyone being in a food coma. Maybe tomorrow...

Friday, 5/12/2023- Today was another beautiful morning with a warm breeze and we enjoyed coffee and breakfast on the deck. Today's walk took us to Truman Avenue to find the B&B La Pensione, where Rob & Donna have stayed in the past when they won the trip down to see Jimmy Buffet. We walked to **First Legal Rum Distillery** where Eddie bought some Bad Bitch Rum. We signed up for the rum tour. Donna went back to the condo instead. The tour was very interesting. The owner, Paul Menta, was a chef in Key West for several years before he opened this distillery. He became a rumrunner when he sailed down to Cuba and sold some of his rum to the Cubans. No molasses is used in the making of these rums. Only the finest crystalized sugar is used. We came back to the condo for pizza, then relaxed, packed a little, and got ready for the



night's adventures. We first went up to **The Whistle Bar** for a drink on the balcony overlooking Duval Street. At 4pm, we walked down Caroline Street to **Pepe's** where we once again enjoyed their Happy Hour with oysters, shrimp, and fish dip. We stopped in at Island Dog Bar for a drink. Then we walked down to Mallory Dock for our last sunset, and it was a very beautiful one tonight. Going through Mallory, it seemed very quiet with only a few acts there. I saw Dominique the Catman on his cell phone. It seems strange that he is no longer performing since COVID. The city also no longer allows fire at Mallory Square, so no more cats jumping through the flaming hoops. It is the end of an era. We walked through Capt. Tony's, which was a little smoky, and continued down Duval Street, which was much more crowded. Everyone turned down Caroline Street to our condo, so guess we won't be going to Little Room Jazz Club after all.

Saturday, 5/13/2023- This morning we packed up our car to begin our journey back to Marco Island. First, we walked down to **BO's Fish Wagon** for breakfast. We enjoyed a very good Torte Española. I stopped at Kino's to get another pair of aqua sandals. On the way out of town, we drove by the beaches to show Donna. They are not very impressive. Nothing like our beautiful beaches on Marco Island! Eddie drove and we had an uneventful trip up the keys. We stopped in at **Schnebly's Wineries** and went to the **Miami Brewing Company** for a flight of beers and some very good smoked food. Since Eddie wanted to drink some beer, I offered to drive the rest of the way back. The trip started out ok until we got onto Tamimi Trail. It seemed odd that there

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was no one behind me. After driving past the Miccosukee Village, there was a roadblock, and we were ordered to turn left onto the Loop Road. OMG! I drove what seemed like forever on a mostly gravel road at 25 MPH. I guess there was an uncontrolled burn, and the road was totally shut down. We finally got back on the highway and then drove the rest of the way with no problems. We arrived in Marco Island, dropped off Rob & Donna, and finally got home at 7:30pm. The kids were very happy to see us.

It was a very busy, but fun trip. We managed to see and do just about everything on my list, except for the Little Room Jazz Club. We tried several new things and really enjoyed them all. We enjoyed great live music, which is my favorite thing to do in Key West. We enjoyed wonderful happy hours at some new places and some old favorites. The trip to Dry Tortugas and Fort Jefferson was very interesting. The rum tour was very interesting and fun. The Butterfly Conservatory was so beautiful and relaxing.

Most people who visit Key West go to Sloppy Joe's, Rick's, or Hog's Breath. We did not visit those places. Most people only see Duval Street. We walked the neighborhoods, enjoying the beautiful architecture, and whimsical décor of the homes. We branched out, trying many different cocktails. We went for the big adventure of going to Dry Tortugas. I guess you could say that we took the road less traveled. Certainly, on the trip back home to Marco Island, we took the road less traveled...the Loop Road...and I hope to never take that particular road ever again!

Created by Cindy Crane, Marco Island, FL

