

THE PIGEON KEY FOUNDATION & MARINE SCIENCE CENTER

OFF-ISLAND ADVENTURES: MARATHON & BIG PINE

Mangrove Kayaking

An opportunity to continue learning from our Marine Habitats of the Florida Keys program, this excursion immerses students in the local mangrove communities in Marathon! The flora and fauna found in the mangrove habitat will amaze and delight your students—from Mangrove Tree Crabs to the Upside-Down Jellyfish, you never know what you're going to see. Some groups are even lucky enough to be joined by manatees, nurse sharks and a wide variety of bird species!



Pigeon Key takes care of transportation (if necessary), guide, and kayaking equipment. Kayaks are launched from nearby Sombrero Beach and all you have to do is enjoy the scenic views and paddle! Our staff have several years of teaching experience, so it is not necessary to be an expert paddler before signing up for this adventure. Many groups find that this excursion is also an exercise in team building and bonding! Most of the kayaks available for the students are tandem (2-person) so learning to work together and relying on your partner can be a challenge. Kayak trips are a full morning or afternoon on your itinerary.

Aquarium Encounters

This attraction in Marathon boasts large aquariums with expansive viewing windows, a natural canal area, and invertebrate and ray touch tanks. Aquarium Encounters provides the hands-on opportunities of our Invertebrate Biodiversity program with a guided tour to all the major attractions in the facility, a question & answer session, and access to all the touch tanks. Shark, Ray, and tropical fish feedings are conducted daily! Visits typically last 1-2 hours. However, the duration and cost of your visit can increase if you choose to add “Encounters” to your experience.



Turtle Hospital

Are your students interested in wildlife rescue and rehabilitation? Are they fans of sea turtles? Then add a visit to The Turtle Hospital in Marathon! Each tour is led by a friendly and knowledgeable staff member of the Turtle Hospital and includes an informational presentation (in an air-conditioned room) followed by a walking tour of the facility. If you are lucky enough to visit during a live surgery, the facility has large viewing windows to observe the procedure. Their surgery schedule varies based on the needs of the patients, so it is difficult to guarantee that a surgery will take place during your tour. Students get to meet the “patients”, learn about on-going rescue and rehabilitation efforts, and current research in the field. The Turtle Hospital staff engages the audience throughout the entire walking tour and encourage all questions. A visit to the Turtle Hospital takes between 1-2 hours.



The Dolphin Research Center

Everyone loves the Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin! The Dolphin Research Center provides an opportunity to explore a successful captive breeding facility while showing off these charismatic marine mammals. Tours include question & answer sessions with members of the DRC educational staff, a variety of regularly scheduled programs about training, breeding, and even performances to music! They also have sea lions, exotic birds and iguanas. The DRC also offers behind-the-scenes tours and Dolphin Encounters, which can vary from swimming with dolphins to having a t-shirt painted by a dolphin! For any marine mammal lover, this is a must-add to your trip! A visit to the Dolphin Research Center can last from 1-4 hours.



Looe Key Snorkel

Looe Key Reef is located off of Big Pine Key about 30 minutes south of Pigeon Key. It is a great addition to Sombrero Reef, the snorkel location included with your trip to Pigeon Key. Part of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Looe Key is an exceptional example of a spur and groove reef. Slightly deeper than Sombrero Reef, many groups that visit Looe Key have the opportunity to swim with larger species like Reef Sharks and 400lb Goliath Groupers which are rare at Sombrero Reef! Trips to Looe Key usually depart Pigeon Key around 7:30am and return around 1:30pm. Many groups choose to couple this activity with a trip to Sombrero Beach (see next page for details) and return to the island around 4:00pm.



Sombrero Beach Trip and Service Project

Because of the 3rd largest barrier coral reef that runs along the Florida Keys, ocean waves are unable to accumulate enough sand to establish many large beaches in the island chain. However, the beach of the Florida Keys is Sombrero Beach! Famous for its long stretches of white sand, a rarity in the keys, a trip to this beach in Marathon is sure to delight your students. After a quick lesson on the hazards of Marine Debris, students are divided into teams and conduct a beach clean-up. Once completed, students are free to enjoy the sand and the waves, and many groups elect to bring a picnic lunch (provided by Pigeon Key). Groups can spend anywhere from an hour to half a day at Sombrero Beach and typically couple their visit with another off-island activity.



For over 20 years, the Pigeon Key Foundation and Marine Science Center has provided private, customized programs to more than 30,000 participants from more than 1,000 schools throughout the world. Programs are tailored to fit all ages from elementary school to post graduate.

Off-island excursions are perfect for an adventurous group! Most of these excursions are available for all over-night trips, but cater to groups staying for more than 2-nights. Rates per participant will increase based on the length of stay and for each off-island adventure added to your groups itinerary.

With so many local attractions to choose from, no two education trips are ever the same!



3-day/2-night trips starting at \$450.00

COVID-19 Protocols: All trips are based off of local, state and CDC guidelines with outdoor activities.



Questions?
Contact Education Director
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