

## HISTORY & NATURE

Hundreds of thousands of years ago when sea level was higher than its present level, the Upper Keys were a living coral reef. As the sea level fluctuated, coral reefs were alternately submerged and exposed, allowing the coral polyps, the small animals that build the reef, to create large structures. When sea level dropped, the coral was exposed, forming the islands of the Florida Keys. Over time, the island was colonized by plants from the Bahamas, Caribbean and West Indies as seeds were transported by wind and sea and in the intestinal tract of migrating birds, most notably the white-crowned pigeon.

The tropical hardwood hammock that thrives on Lignumvitae Key was once common on the highest elevations in the Keys. In 1919, William J. Matheson, a wealthy Miami chemist, bought the 280-acre island and built a caretaker's home with a windmill for electricity and a cistern for rainwater.

The hardwood hammock supports 65 species of trees and woody shrubs, including 10 species that are threatened or endangered. These include the West Indian mahogany, Florida thatch palm and lignum vitae. The island is named for the endangered lignum vitae tree that can be found in great numbers throughout the hammock. Lignum vitae translates to "wood of life." The tree was targeted by early loggers for its dense resinous wood for use in building bearings for ships and for its medicinal properties.



## LIGNUMVITAE KEY BOTANICAL STATE PARK

Offshore Island  
Islamorada, FL 33036  
305-664-2540

### PARK GUIDELINES

- Hours are Thursday through Monday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- An entrance fee is required. Park visitors can pay at the self-service iron ranger located on the island. Price is \$2.50 per person.
- Tours are offered from December to April, Friday through Sunday, at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. The guided tour includes the historic home and costs \$2 per person.
- Visitors should be prepared for mosquitoes from June through November.
- The collection, destruction or disturbance of plants, animals or park property is prohibited.
- Pets are not permitted.
- Snorkelers must stay 100 feet from the dock. Please use/observe diver-down flags.
- For information about joining the Friends of the Islamorada Areas State Parks, Inc., contact us at 305-664-2540.
- Florida's state parks are committed to providing equal access for visitors to all facilities and programs. Should you need assistance to enable your participation, please contact Windley Key's Education Center at 305-664-2540.

[FloridaStateParks.org](http://FloridaStateParks.org)

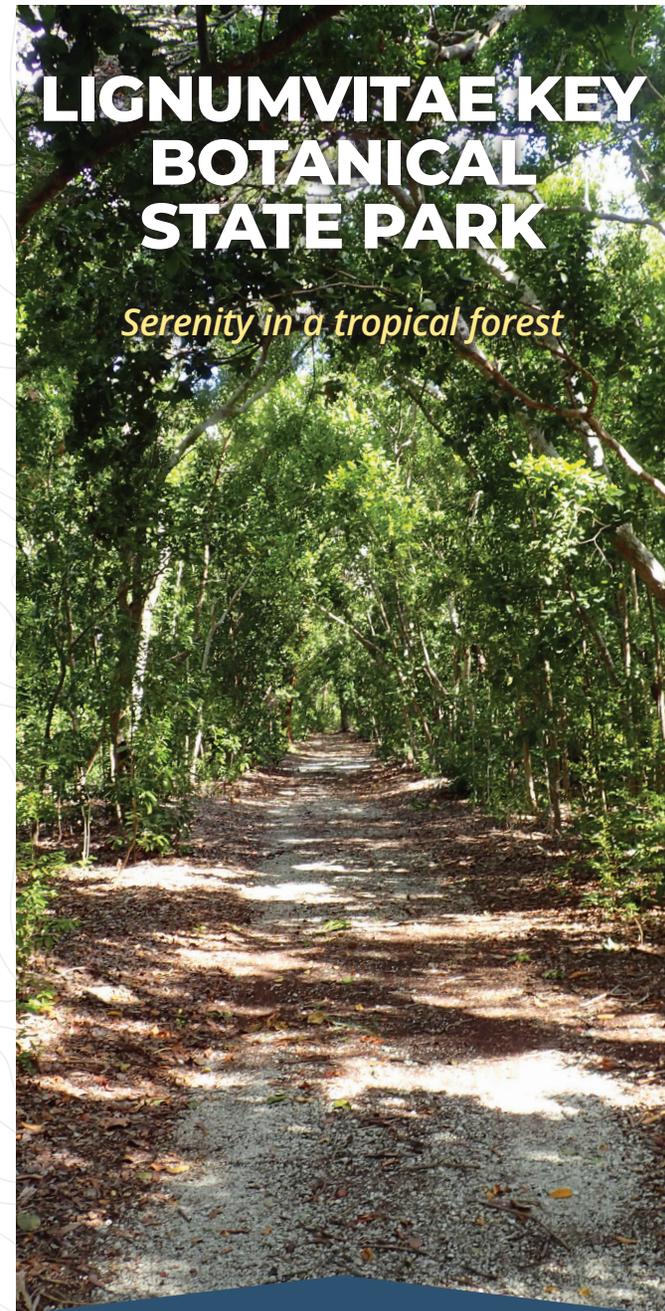
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## LIGNUMVITAE KEY BOTANICAL STATE PARK

*Serenity in a tropical forest*



**FLORIDA  
STATE PARKS**

*...the Real Florida<sup>SM</sup>*



## EXPERIENCES AND AMENITIES

Lignumvitae Key, pronounced “lig-nem-VI-te,” is a relatively undisturbed tropical hardwood hammock that supports numerous species of butterflies, dragonflies, birds and tree snails.

Lignumvitae Key is accessible only by boat. Several local charter companies offer tour boat service and kayak rentals; a list of tour operators is available online. Tours are offered from December to April, Friday through Sunday, at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. These one-hour ranger-guided tours lead visitors through the tropical hardwood hammock to observe species such as the strangler fig, poisonwood, pigeon plum, lignum vitae and gumbo limbo. Access to the nature trails is by ranger-guided tour only.

The Matheson House, a caretaker’s home built in 1919, serves as the Visitor Center and offers visitors a glimpse of how island people lived during a time when most of their needs were met by the land and sea around them.

The Lignumvitae Key management area also includes 10,000 acres of submerged land surrounding Lignumvitae Key, Shell Key and Indian Key. Here, anglers fish for a variety of species including bonefish, tarpon, snapper and barracuda. Fishing is not allowed within 100 feet of the dock. Care must be taken when navigating the shallow seagrass flats in the vicinity of the island so as to not damage the valuable seagrass beds. Boaters should reference a navigational chart for combustible motor exclusion areas.

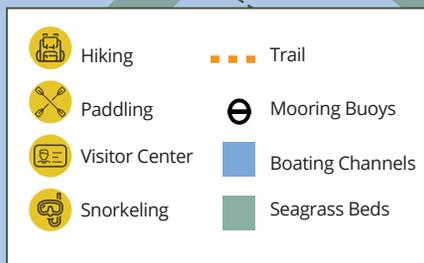
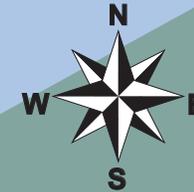
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# Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park



## Directions

Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park is located one mile north of U.S. 1 at mile marker 78.5. The island is accessible by boat, canoe or kayak.



Not for navigational use.

