

# History & Nature

After Key West was settled, "Conch" families moved up the Keys to establish small farming and fishing communities. In the mid-1800s, the Russell family homesteaded Umbrella Key, Windley Key's earlier name. The Russell family lived on the land until it was sold to the Florida East Coast Railway in 1908 for \$852.80. From that time until completion of the Overseas Railroad, the quarries along the track were used to supply thousands of tons of fill for the railroad bed and the bridge approaches.

The railroad was completed in 1912. The quarries and Windley Key Station continued to operate with local trains stopping daily to deliver fresh water from the mainland and pick up mail and passengers. On return trips, shipments of polished "key stone" were railed back to the mainland. This key stone, a decorative building stone, can be seen on several buildings throughout the United States, including the St. Louis Post Office. Local examples include the Alison Fahrer Environmental Education Center at Windley Key and Hurricane Monument in Islamorada. The quarry was active into the 1960s and today stands as a preserved geological treasure. The clean cuts of the quarry machinery reveal the preserved fossilized specimens of a variety of ancient coral animals.

The park offers a rare opportunity for geologists and visitors to compare the living corals of today with their fossilized ancestors. The limestone cuts also reveal the thin layer of soil that supports the abundant variety of botanical life that thrives in the subtropical environment of the Florida Keys.



## Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park

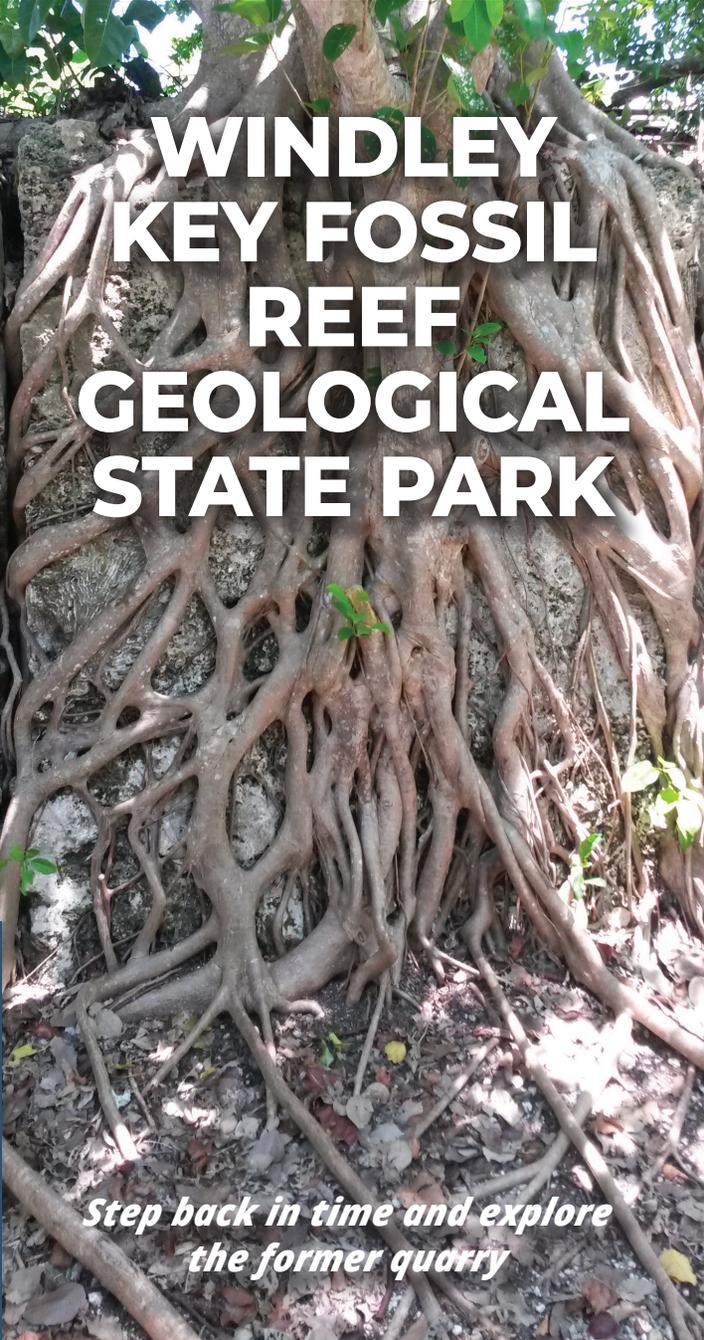
84900 Overseas Highway  
Islamorada, Florida 33036  
305-664-2540

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



### Park Guidelines

- The Visitor Center is open Thursday through Monday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Guided tours are offered December through April, Friday through Sunday, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- A fee is required for guided tours and to access the nature trails.
- The collection, destruction or disturbance of plants, animals or park property is prohibited.
- Pets are permitted in designated areas only. Pets must be kept on a leash no longer than six feet and must be well-behaved at all times.
- Alcohol, fireworks and hunting are prohibited.
- To join the Friends of the Islamorada Area State Parks or become a volunteer, inquire at the Visitor Center.
- Florida's state parks are committed to providing equal access to all facilities and programs. Should you need assistance to enable your participation, please contact staff at any ranger station or call 850-245-3076 (Voice) or 711 (Florida Relay Service).

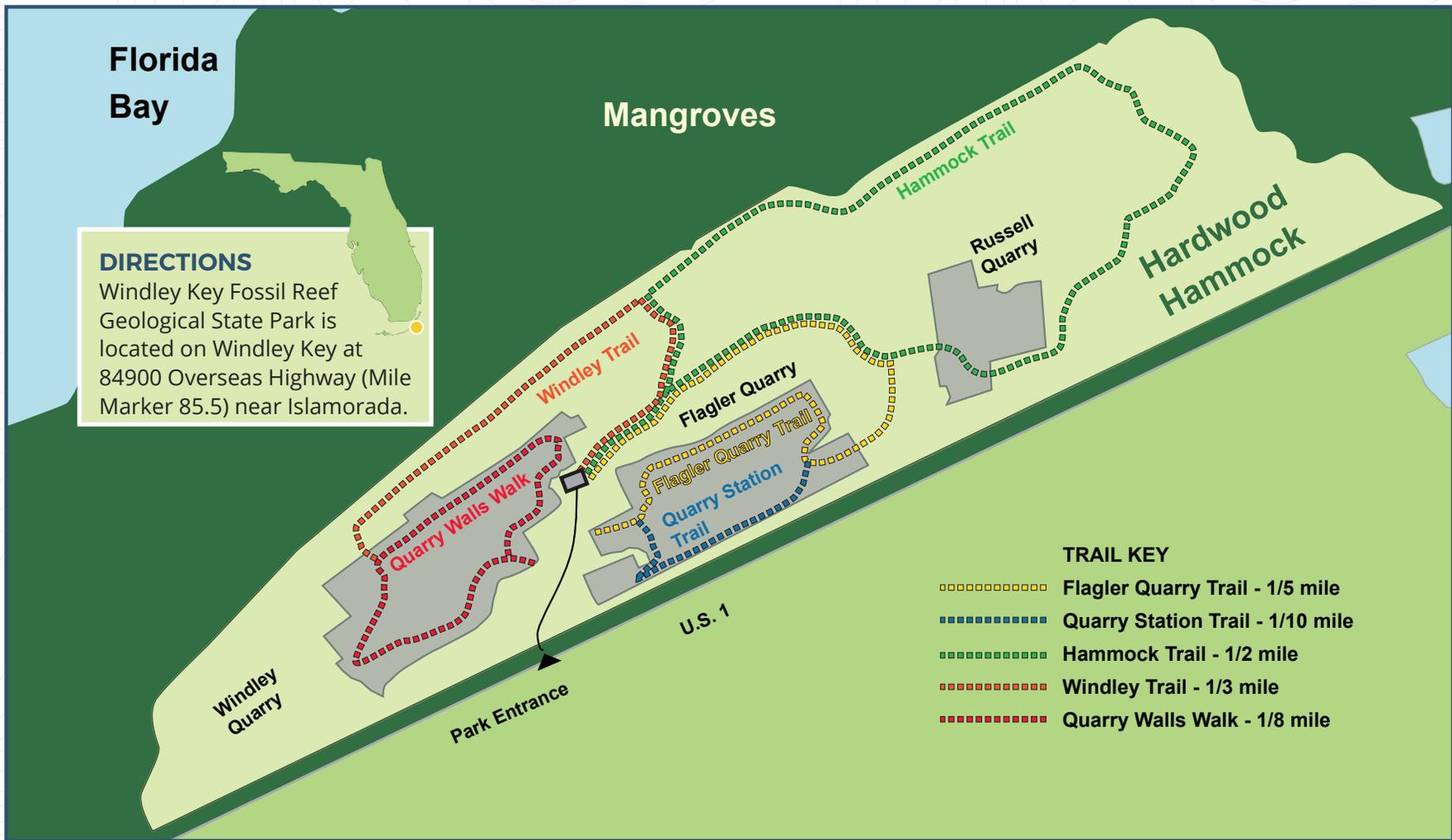


# WINDLEY KEY FOSSIL REEF GEOLOGICAL STATE PARK



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*Step back in time and explore the former quarry*



## EXPERIENCES AND AMENITIES

Formed of Key Largo limestone (fossilized coral), this land was sold to the Florida East Coast Railroad and was used to build Henry Flagler's Overseas Railroad in the early 1900s. After the railroad was built, the quarry was used until the 1960s to produce exquisite pieces of decorative stone called Key stone.

At Windley Key, visitors can walk within the eight-foot-high quarry walls to see cross sections of the

ancient coral reef formed nearly 125,000 years ago. One can also learn about the quarry and its operation—an important part of Florida's 20th-century history. Samples of the quarry machinery have been preserved at the park. Ranger-led tours of the old quarries and the West Indian tropical hardwood hammock are available seasonally Friday through Sunday at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Visitors may also explore 1.5 miles of self-guided trails that wind through a tropical hardwood hammock. Along the trails, visitors can observe more than 40 species of trees and plants that are native to the Florida Keys including Florida thatch

palm, white ironwood and gumbo limbo. With the aid of a guidebook, numbered trail stops and interpretive markers, visitors can learn about the natural and cultural resources of Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park.

The Alison Fahrer Environmental Education Center, open Thursday through Monday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., features educational exhibits about the history of Flagler's railroad, tropical hardwood hammocks and the geology of the Florida Keys.

Picnic tables are available in several locations; however, shady tables are limited.