Welcome to The Cedar Keys and Beyond!
By Tom Liebert

Are you seeking an island getaway? Get away from it all; go back to a slower, simpler time. Welcome to Cedar Key, a relaxed island community that is reminiscent of old Florida. Come with me. Bring your friends and family. Let’s explore the Cedar Keys together. Just 50 miles west of Gainesville Florida and three miles into the Gulf of Mexico, you will reach the enchanting islands of the Cedar Keys and the Town of Cedar Key located on Way Key, the largest of the islands that make up the Cedar Keys. Our seaside village has long been admired for its natural beauty and abundant supply of fresh seafood.

Cedar Key is one of the oldest ports in the State and the location of Florida’s first railroad depot. Cedar Key became a major supplier of seafood and timber products to the northeast. Our quaint village boasts beautiful sunrises over the marshes, sunsets over the Gulf of Mexico. Cedar Key is recognized by birders everywhere as a major birding hot spot. Sport fishing is enjoyed from our downtown marina. Get on the water with one of our knowledgeable fishing
guides. You may even want to try fishing our skinny water’s by kayak. Tour boats, kayaks and power boats are all available at our downtown City Marina.

On your visit to Cedar Key you may want to stop by our Historical Society and pick up a Walking Tour Guide to our historical area. Cedar Key is the second oldest town in the State of Florida. The oldest home on the west coast is located right here in Cedar Key. Old southern architecture is abundant throughout our friendly island community.

Many of our fine restaurants are located on Dock Street, built over the Gulf of Mexico offering unparalleled views of the islands of Atsena Otie, Seahorse and North Keys. Our clams, known as Cedar Key Sweets, are raised locally in our clean waters surrounding the Cedar Keys. The clams are prepared by our renowned chefs almost any way you can imagine. A treat you will not soon forget.

The more adventurous may want to enjoy the back estuaries, fish in-shore for Redfish, Trout and more. Go offshore for cobia and grouper. Take a hike on nearby nature trails, photograph wildlife in their natural habitats, take a kayak through the backwaters or out to Atsena Otie Island. Tour the islands and see eagles, osprey, roseatte spoonbills, white pelicans and the magnificent frigate bird that all call the Cedar Keys their home. On the water you will see dolphin, turtles, mullet jumping and redfish tailing.
In Cedar Key, abundant history comes alive. Talk to most anyone living in Cedar Key and they will share some history with you. Many of our Cedar Key families go back as far as five generations and more. Evidence of Native Cultures in Cedar Key date as far back as 500 BC. First mapped in 1542 by a Spanish cartographer and called “Las Islas Sabines” (The Cedar Islands). Cedar Key has been at various times a watering stop for ships headed for Europe, a home for pirates, a holding station for Seminole Indians who had been captured or who had surrendered until they could be sent to the West, an important source of salt for the Confederacy during the early part of the Civil War, a commercial port, a prime source of cedar for America’s major pencil companies, and a commercial fishing center.

In the 1850’s, Cedar Key, ideally located between the Suwannee and Waccasassa Rivers was a hub of Steamboat traffic. The Cedar Key lighthouse on Seahorse Key was in operation from its completion in 1855 until the light was turned out in 1915. Known as The Cedar Key Light on Seahorse Key, it is the oldest lighthouse still standing on Florida’s west coast. Today the lighthouse hosts the University of Florida’s Center for marine biology research. Seahorse Key also supports two major west coast rookeries and is closed to the public from March 1 until July 1, including an area 100 yards off shore. This is done to protect our many ground nesting birds.

Today, Cedar Key is best known as an eco tourism destination and for our aquaculture industry. Aquaculture farming, better known as “Clam Farming” is a relatively young industry in the Cedar Keys. Over the past 15 years, Cedar Key has become known worldwide for our Cedar Key Sweets. We are proud to be the #1 producer of farm raised clams in the United States. Our clams are specially packaged for air cargo and shipped around the world.
In 1929 President Herbert Hoover established the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge by naming three of the islands as a breeding ground for colonial birds. Today, that number has grown to thirteen islands. Immediately to the north lies the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge. This refuge encompasses over 54,000 acres and twenty two miles of unspoiled coastline, as well as many islands. These restricted islands are home to hundreds of species of birds and animals and are only accessible by boat or kayak and host some of the largest numbers of nesting birds in Florida.

We hope you will not only enjoy exploring our web site, but find it informative. The brochure and map section offers many paddling and trail guides, as well as informative brochures. The Cedar Key Guide strives to be the most comprehensive eco tourism guide to Cedar Key.

Please visit our seaside village. We know you will keep coming back. We all did.

Kayak Tom
Tom can be found most days at the beach with his kayaks.