



Fantasy Fest

Key West to Be 'Habitat for Insanity' during October 22-31

COURTESY OF THE FLORIDA KEYS AND KEY WEST TDC

Expect Key West's habitual eccentricity and offbeat flavor to intensify radically during Fantasy Fest 2010, themed "Habitat for Insanity." Set for Oct. 22-31, the uninhibited extravaganza entices attendees to abandon real-world cares for a fantasy escape on America's southernmost island.

The annual 10-day festival offers more than 40 masquerade balls, costume contests and celebrations, culminating in a dazzling parade of large-scale floats and costumed marching groups.

Events kick off Friday, Oct. 22, with a Royal Coronation Ball to crown the king and queen of the high-energy "habi-

tat." Key West's Caribbean roots are celebrated that same weekend, with Friday and Saturday's Goombay street party in the historic Bahama Village neighborhood.

Subsequent festival highlights include Tuesday's "Diagnosis Psychosis" Headdress Ball, featuring "heady" prizes for the best masks, cowls, feathered turbans and other cranium cov-

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ers. Wednesday brings the quirky Pet Masquerade and Parade, where costumed dogs, cats, exotic birds and other "party animals" strut their stuff on an oceanfront stage. The lavish Pretenders in Paradise costume competition is staged Thursday, Oct. 28, under the stars beside the Gulf of Mexico. Entrants in glittering costumes, some so large that they loom over awed spectators, dance and dazzle their way through performances featuring lights and music.

Key West's Duval Street becomes a habitat for high jinks Friday, Oct. 29, during the Fantasy Fest Street Fair, where vendors tempt attendees with feathered masks, colorful costumes, artistry, food and libations. Just before sunset, the Masquerade March parades through Key West's Old Town, starring costumed characters in outrageous attire.

Other traditional Fantasy Fest standouts include the Monster's Ball, a rowdy toga party, tea dances, sensual after-dark soirees and exuberant themed costume contests.

The insanity reaches maximum intensity Saturday, Oct. 30, as tens of thousands of spectators gather for the Captain Morgan Fantasy Fest Parade in Key West's historic downtown. The spectacle typically includes feather-bedecked marching groups, Caribbean bands and elaborately decorated motorized floats - such as a 40-foot mechanical shark, surrounded by dancing sea urchins, that wowed crowds in a past parade.

For more Fantasy Fest information, including an event schedule, visit www.fantasyfest.net or call 305-296-1817. For information about lodging in Key West, contact the Key West Chamber of Commerce at 1-800-LAST-KEY (800-527-8539) or visit www.fla-keys.com.

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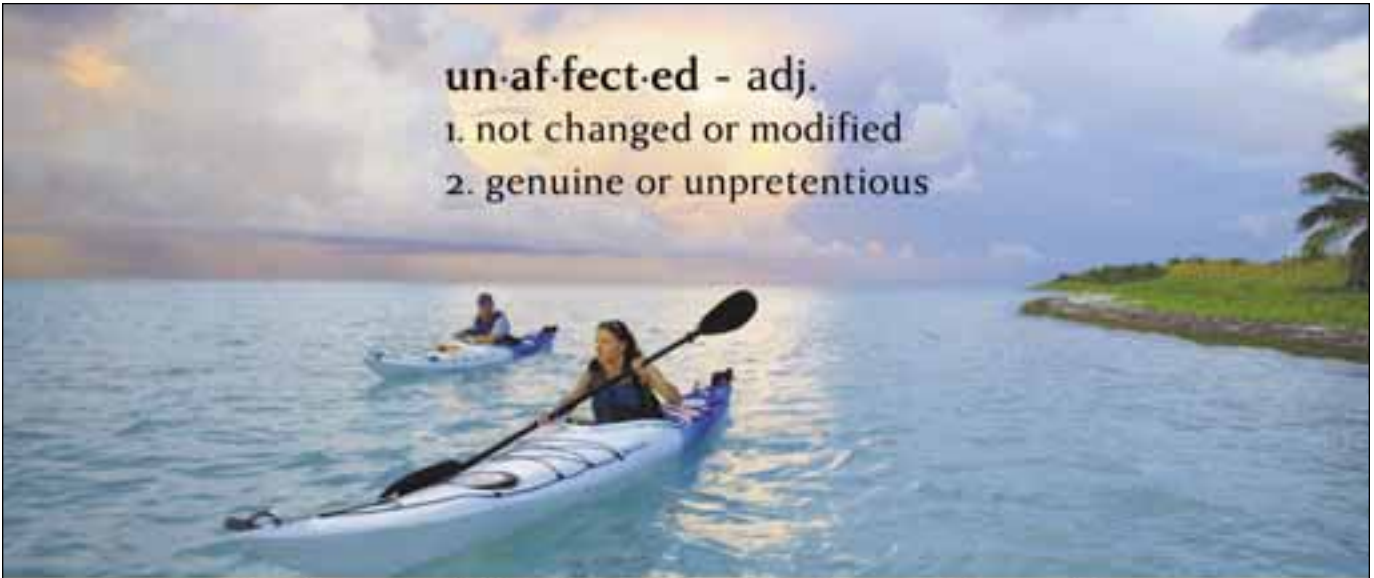
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