

A photograph of a modern hotel room. In the foreground, there's a large, round, tufted ottoman in a light beige color. To the left, a wooden desk with a white chair and a vase of pink flowers. In the background, a window with sheer curtains looks out onto a green landscape. To the right, a brown sofa with orange and white pillows. A large abstract painting hangs on the wall.

# Smart meetings

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# Business in *Paradise*

By Nikki Gloudean

Retreat from office life by booking an island meeting



## Florida Keys

Starting just 15 miles south of Miami, the Florida Keys display arresting ocean panoramas and a kick-back attitude. Key West, in particular, reflects the Caribbean's free spirit; in 1982, it famously tried to secede from the United States to become The Conch Republic. Today, a tongue-in-cheek website devoted to the secession includes information on passports and a specially appointed secretary general.

A standout among a fine assortment of meeting hotels is Casa Marina, a Waldorf-Astoria Resort that stretches along more than 1,100 feet of pristine beach and offers six outdoor meeting venues. A group trip to the former home of Ernest Hemingway is a must, especially for literary-fiend attendees. Group tours are available, and the grounds' blooming gardens can be used to host special events.

On Duck Key island, about halfway down the chain, Hawks Cay is a AAA Four Diamond resort with 20,000 sq. ft. of indoor space and a private catamaran that be used for receptions on the water. Key Largo and Islamorada additionally contain meeting venues and are worth considering for a tropical meeting.