

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Key West to celebrate the 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Conch Republic  
April 17-26. Show your FUNdependence and party like it's 1982!**

**Key West, Florida Keys & Conch Republic** – Calling FUN lovers of all ages to gather in Key West for the 44<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conch Republic Independence Celebration, April 17-26 for 10 days of 30+ unique, colorful, and “somewhat” historic events for all ages.

This whimsical, grassroots celebration features outdoor events held throughout Key West in waterfront parks, iconic bars, and unique island venues – with opportunities to party with the Conch Republic’s High Command, pirates, and island dignitaries. The celebration honors the island’s eccentric community and is a testament to the uniqueness and independent nature of the people who call the Florida Keys home.

Show off your competitive spirit and cheer on or compete in serious and light-hearted hilarious competitions, including Schooner Wharf Bar’s Conch-Shell Blowing Contest April 17; Earth Day 5-K starting from Truman Waterfront Park April 18 and the Great Drag Races on Duval Street April 18; Cow Key Bridge Run ZERO-K April 19; Julie Hansen Memorial Blue-Ribbon Bed Races on Duval Street April 25; and Schooner Wharf the Wrecker’s Cup Race Series to Sand Key Lighthouse April 26.

Everyone loves a parade and the celebration includes both a land and boat parade. The World’s Looongest Parade, set for April 23, features colorful walking groups, bikes, cars and floats, begins at the Atlantic Ocean, and rolls down Duval Street, ending at the Historic Seaport for Schooner Wharf Bar’s Parade After Party – best viewing along Duval and Greene streets.

The Conch Republic Naval Independence Parade, taking place in Key West Harbor April 24, features private and passenger vessels, including majestic tall ships, tiki boats, catamarans & sloops, Captains are invited to enter their vessels and join the Conch Republic Naval Independence Boat Parade that precedes the not to be missed – Great Sea Battle in Key West Harbor.

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Key West's 44<sup>th</sup> annual Conch Republic Independence Celebration (CRIC 2026 for short) honors the founding of the Conch Republic, formed in 1982, in response to actions of the US government that put up a Federal Blockade at Florida City – removed several weeks later, due to the protests of the people who reside in the Keys.

Show your Conch Republic pride and join members of the High Command at Mallory Square for the Opening Ceremony & Raising of the Colors, April 17; and on April 23 – known as the Conch Republic's 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Cinco de Mayo & Bastille Day rolled into one, for the Independence Day Ceremony, celebrating the 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Conch Republic.

The celebration also offers opportunities to party with the Conch Republic Military Forces High Command, pirates and Conch-stituents – and raise monies for local charities. They include the 27<sup>th</sup> annual Earth Day 5-k and Conch Crawl Pub Stroll April 18; Cow Key Bridge Run ZERO-k April 19, Military Muster at the Key West Cultural Center and Veterans Museum April 20, and Conch-Tail Party & Sunset Toast (live and virtual) April 21 at Ocean Key Resort's Sunset Pier.

Find one-of-a-kind treasures and artworks at the 42nd Annual Craft Street Fair on Duval April 18; shop specialty foods, local produce and arts and crafts at the Conch Republic Truman Waterfront Market April 23, and Key West Artisans Market at Higgs Beach Indigenous Park April 19 and 26.

Celebrate Mother Earth and Father Ocean in the Conch Republic and join the Key West Ploggers, Keep Key West Beautiful, and Conch Republic Green Ops for their annual Conchy Beach Clean Up, April 17 and Mallory Square Clean UP April 24. Spend time with Mote Marine's environmentalists and scientists at Ocean Fest – A Community Celebration, scheduled April 25 at the Truman Waterfront.

The signature event of the Celebration is the 43<sup>rd</sup> reenactment of The Great Sea Battle of the Conch Republic, which is an "All in FUN" skirmish that pits the United States Coast Guard vessels against the mighty fierce power of Conch Republic Military Forces. Like the first Great Sea Battle, fought aboard the schooner Western Union in 1982, the ammo of choice includes

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water cannons, Cuban bread, Conch fritters, and most importantly, humor. As First Sea Lord and Supreme Commander Emeritus, Admiral Finbar always said, “It’s war done right.”

Best viewing for the reenactment of the Great Sea Battle and preceding Naval Independence Parade is at Mallory Square, next to the Conch Republic Army’s Land Forces, or book passage on a Conch Republic privateer vessel participating in the battle.

After the battle, head to Schooner Wharf Bar at the Key West Historic Seaport for the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual Surrender Ceremony & Victory Party, April 24 – a ‘tongue in cheek’ ceremony between the United States Coast Guard and Conch Republic Military Forces.

FUN Fundraisers also include the Conch Republic Rum Party at Bali Bar April 18 and Hot Havana Night at Kaya April 22. Local charities benefitting from celebration events include the Conch Republic Marine Army weekly ocean and mangrove clean ups, Sister Season Fund, Monroe County Sheriff’s Animal Farm and Petting Zoo, TREE Institute, Cuties in Action, and Mote Marine’s coral reef research and restoration projects.

Dedicated to bringing humor, warmth, respect, and peace, to a world in need of all four, the Celebration embraces our island’s philosophy ‘We are all One Human Family.’ Stop by the Official CRIC 2026 Welcome Center at Thompson Plaza at the Historic Seaport, foot of Elizabeth & Green, for celebration schedule brochures, event tickets, and ‘Official Conch Republic merchandise and citizen passports.

Key West’s 44<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conch Republic Independence Celebration, presented by the Monroe County Tourist Development Council - District Advisory Council 1, City of Key West, Conch Republic Military Forces, and members of the Florida Keys business community, including Historic Tours of America, Key West Historic Seaport, and Schooner Wharf Bar & Galley.

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