✦KEY WEST LEGS STARTER ROUTINE

Why Your Feet Give Out by Day 3 in Key West

And the 5-minute fix that has *nothing* to do with better shoes

STEPHEN CABEBE, PT, DPT · DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY + TRAVEL EXPERT

Sound familiar?

You booked the Old Town guesthouse, the sunset sail, and the key lime pie stop. Then around day 3, your body started falling apart. Aching feet, a tight lower back, and calves that felt like bricks. By sunset at Mallory Square, you were hunting for a bench instead of watching the sky.

The good news: you didn't do anything wrong. Everyone says Key West is small enough to walk, so you walked it, for miles a day on hot pavement in thick humidity, on a body that spends most of the year at a desk. It's not your fault, and it's completely fixable.

Two Things Almost *Everyone* Gets Wrong:

× **"Better shoes will fix it."** Shoes, insoles and socks treat the symptom. No insole can do the job your legs are supposed to do, and flip-flops ask your feet to work even harder.

× **"I'll just walk more first."** A flat 30-minute walk at home isn't 5 hours on hot concrete in 70%+ humidity. It doesn't train the tissues that break down.

The fix isn't more stuff or more steps.

✦ THE FRAMEWORK

Train for Key West Like It's an Endurance Event

A Key West trip *is* an endurance event, it just doesn't look like one. Here's what an ordinary day on the island asks of your legs:

1.25 mi
Duval Street, end to end

3 mi
South end of Duval to Mallory Square and back

90°F
Average July high, with humidity around 72%

Every one of those miles is on concrete: hard sidewalks, a curb at every cross street, and slabs pushed up by tree roots. Humid air also makes it harder for sweat to cool you down, so the same pace wears you out faster than it does at home. Add the Southernmost Point, dinner, and the walk back to your room, and the miles add up fast.

You planned the sunset sail and the dinner spots, so your body deserves the same prep. No marathon training, just the three areas that decide whether your feet make it to sunset.

I call it building your Key West Legs.

1

Feet & Arches
Your foundation and shock absorbers.

2

Calves
The engine that carries you through every mile.

3

Hips
The stabilizers that protect your back and knees.

THE 30-SECOND SELF-CHECK

Can you do 25 single-leg heel raises per leg without cramping or losing your balance?

Place both hands against a wall. Lift one foot, rise onto the ball of your standing foot, then lower. That's one rep. Every step down Duval is a mini version of this, thousands of times a day. Can't hit 25 quality reps? That's why your calves are screaming by day 3.

✦ THE 5-MINUTE ROUTINE

Your Key West Legs Starter

3 to 4 times a week, 8 to 12 weeks before your trip.
No gym, no equipment. You can do it while your coffee brews.

1

Calf Raises 1.5 MIN

Hold a counter, rise onto the balls of your feet, pause one second, lower *slowly*. Max controlled reps. Endurance, not speed. This is the push-off behind every block of Duval.

2

Sit-to-Stands 1.5 MIN

From a sturdy chair, stand all the way up *slowly* and sit all the way down *slowly* with arms crossed. This trains the legs that get you off a bar stool, up from a low beach chair, and back onto the trolley.

3

Single-Leg Balance 2 MIN

Stand on one foot for 30 seconds, then switch. Repeat both sides. This sharpens the stability that saves your ankles on curbs, root-cracked sidewalks, and every time you hop on or off a rental bike.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Let's Build Your Key West Legs Together

Every body is different. On a free Travel Prep Discovery Call we'll talk through where your body is now, what's likely to break down, and a clear plan to walk all day and come home energized.

Book your free Discovery Call



Stephen Cabebe
Doctor of Physical Therapy
Travel Expert

Sunset at Mallory Square on your last night should feel as good as the first. Let's plan your body for it.

Stephen Cabebe
Doctor of Physical Therapy + Travel Expert