

To Key West and Back

Every January the Island of Key West Florida becomes inundated with sailors from all walks. Every crew member and owner deals with the trials and tribulations of getting to Key West; through snow and sleet, and gloom of airport transfers. The one fact that most crew members fail to see is that the trials and tribulations of getting the boat to Key West actually started for the owner months before. After four years of getting all manner of racing boats to and from Key West I can offer the following thoughts on the matter to help ease the process.

The most logistically challenging aspect of participating in Yachting Key West Race Week with your J/105 will be the transport of the boat to and from Key West. The reason for this challenge is due to the variables associated with the transport and the risk of over the road travel. The first question I always ask people when they contact my company about doing Key West is whether or not they own a trailer for the boat. If they do have a trailer then every aspect of their winter trip south becomes vastly easier and much less costly. With out a trailer many more obstacles must be overcome which inevitably raises the budget to race in Key West.

With a boat on its own trailer the next questions is how to pull it to Florida. There are two basic options: you (or a crew member) with a personally owned vehicle or a service provider such as my company Fast Track. When you tow your own boat you must not only be comfortable pulling a 35 foot, 10,000 lbs load, but you also must be secure in the fact that the boat is properly prepared for over the road travel. With those two requirements met you should make certain that the vehicle has what it takes to do the job. It should be a truck and not a "SUV". The minimum rating for the vehicle, whether it is a Van, Pick-up, or Suburban type, should be 250, however, a 350 is much better suited. Insurance for the road travel should not be a problem if you are towing your own boat because most insurance policies cover over the road travel but you should definitely confirm that with your broker. If you decide to employ a service provider be certain to check that they have 'hauling insurance'. Most boat policy's state that if you employ a third party to transport your boat then the boat's insurance does not cover over the road transport. The advantage to having a professional move the boat is that the boats are rather large to be towed and it is presumed that the transport company has a great deal of experience moving boats over the road. Fast Track, for example, has transported a wide range of boats for a total of 300,000 miles in three years. A lot is learned in that many miles. As well if something is to happen to the boat in route then it's as much if not more the problem for the company as it is for you.

If you do not own a trailer then there is no choice but to use a service provider. There are two types of transport companies you can choose from: a trucking company that will build a cradle with stands around your boat on a flat bed trailer or a company that utilizes a trailer specifically made for a J/105. Either way, there will be additional costs. The boat must be loaded and unloaded from the trailer, the storage fees in Florida will be much higher because the storage will have to be at a marina type location on poppets/jack stands. Finally, if you want to utilize Fast Track's yard in down town Key West the boat will have to be loaded for the final trip into Key West. All of this loading/unloading and increase in storage fees is repeated for the SORC, then Charleston Race Week events. On average if you are going to

race on the southern circuit for more than one winter I strongly recommend making the investment in a new trailer. For most classes that travel on a national circuit, a trailer is a foregone conclusion.

The next decision is when to ship the boat south. At Fast Track we ship all of our boats to Florida as early as possible. This has a number of advantages: if the boat goes south by December 10 then more than likely you will not have to winterize the boat. With the Fast Track system the storage before, between, and after the events is much less expensive than a winter storage contract in your home town. Additionally, over-the-road transport is a risky business and if the boat is shipped early and something is to happen to the boat then you or your service provider has more time to repair any damage. Finally, just as the crew may have problems getting to Key West due to snow delays, so too can the boat get snowed in.

Once in Key West there are few choices in the way of yards. The only two local yards capable of handling a J/105 is Robbie's Marine and Peninsular Marine. Both are located on Stock Island (one Key up from Key West) and offer their fair share of local color. Both yards combined do not have the capacity to handle all of the influx of boats for Yachting Key West Race Week so Fast Track and Premiere Racing have teamed up to provide a marina service as to offer an alternative. This Mobile Marina operated by Fast Track at the Truman Annex Navy Base is located in down town Key West with in minutes of where most the boats dock for the week. Essentially it is a yard for racers managed by racers.

There are essentially only three options for dockage in Key West: Conch Harbor Marine, the Historic Seaport Marina (run by the City of Key West) and the Galleon Hotel and Marina. The largest of the three is the Historic Seaport Marina and usually provides the best chance for securing a slips. The other two are normally booked a year in advance, though there are drop-outs later in the Fall so it doesn't hurt to get on the waiting list. There are other marina options in Key West and Stock Island (including docking at the inner wall of the Truman Annex Navy Basin) – check the Race Week Web Page for details: http://www.premiere-racing.com/keywest/2002%20KW/kw_2002_index.htm. Key West is an interesting place where things rarely stays the same. If you are planning to compete next January, call now to book your dock arrangements.

There is one simple concept that will help your transport south go smoothly: prior planning with arrangements made well ahead of time. I personally have spoken with many J/105 owners about attending Yachting Key West Race Week 2002 and if what I hear is any indication, the J/105 fleet may be the largest one design fleet in Key West. I'm sure it will prove to be great racing, in a great class, in a great location. Good Luck and I'll see you in Key West

Terence Glackin
Owner/General Manager
Fast Track Yacht Management

Fast Track Yacht Management
Was formed in 1998 to service medium sized race boats on their perspective national circuits. With well over 100% growth every year, Fast Track has become the leading service provider in the Mumm 30, the J/105, and the 1D35 fleets. Services range from

over the road transport with the companies fleet of trucks, to the operation of 'Mobil Marinas' in the winter, to full race management. For question or an estimate for service please call (401)845-0871 or see our web page at www.fasttrackusa.com