

# Key West

## Itinerary



## Trip Overview

This 4-day itinerary balances Key West's iconic attractions with off-the-beaten-path adventures and pure relaxation. You'll explore literary history at the Hemingway House, snorkel with sea turtles in crystal-clear waters at Dry Tortugas National Park, and sink your toes into some of Florida's best beaches at Bahia Honda. We've built in flexibility for different adventure styles—whether your group wants to deep-sea fish or leisurely bike through botanical gardens, there's something for everyone.

**Perfect for:** Couples, friend groups, families with older kids, first-time visitors who want to see the highlights plus hidden gems

**Activity level:** Moderate. Expect some early mornings (especially for Dry Tortugas), walking/biking, and sun exposure. But there's also plenty of beach lounging and sunset cocktail time.

## Know Before You Go

**Best Time to Visit:** December through April offers the best weather (70s-80s, low humidity). May through November is hurricane season and can be hot and humid, but you'll find better deals.

**Getting Around:** Key West is only 2 miles x 4 miles. Rent bikes, use the Duval Loop trolley (free!), or just walk. You won't need a car in Old Town.

**Book in Advance:**

- Dry Tortugas ferry (sells out weeks ahead, especially in high season)
- Fishing charters
- Popular restaurants for dinner

# Day 1

## Hemingway, Icons & Sunset Celebration

### Morning (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

#### Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum

- **Address:** 907 Whitehead Street
- **Hours:** 9 AM – 5 PM daily
- **Cost:** ~\$20 adults
- **Time needed:** 60–90 minutes

*Insider tip:* Go early to beat the cruise ship crowds and see the cats at their most active. Tours are first-come, first-served, so get your name on the list early.

#### Walk to Southernmost Point (10 minutes from Hemingway House)

- **Best photo time:** Morning light is better than afternoon

*Insider tip:* There's usually a line, but it moves quickly. While you're there, check out the nearby Southernmost Beach—less crowded than you'd think.

### Lunch (12:00 PM – 1:30 PM)

**Cuban Coffee Queen:** Delicious Cuban food, but the highlight is the coffee! It'll keep you going all day long.

### Afternoon (1:30 PM – 5:30 PM)

#### Duval Street Exploration

- Work your way north from the Cuban Coffee Queen
  - Must-stops: Key West Key Lime Pie Co. (the original, at 511 Greene St)
  - Kermit's Key West Key Lime Shoppe (samples! & a GF slice)
  - Fast Buck Freddie's (local goods, fun browsing)
  - Peppers of Key West (hot sauce heaven)

### Evening (5:30 PM – 9:00 PM)

#### Mallory Square Sunset Celebration

- **Arrive by:** 5:30–6:00 PM (sunset times vary by season)
- **What to expect:** Street performers, artists, food vendors, and crowds

*Insider tip:* Head to the far western edge for slightly fewer people and better sunset views. Grab a Key lime cookie from the cookie lady.

### Dinner

**Half Shell Raw Bar:** Casual waterfront, fresh seafood, can be loud and fun

# Day 2

## Choose Your Adventure

### Morning Adventures (7:30 AM – 1:00 PM)

#### Option A: Deep Sea Fishing Charter

- **Departure:** Usually 7:30 or 8:00 AM
- **Duration:** Half-day (4-5 hours) or full-day options
- **What to book:** Look for charters targeting mahi-mahi, grouper, snapper
- **Cost:** \$700 up to 4 people for a half-day
- **Recommended operator:** Shadow Caster Charters
- **What to bring:** Sunscreen, hat, sunglasses, seasickness meds if prone, cooler if you want to keep your catch, snacks

#### Option B: E-Bike Tour & Botanical Garden

- **Departure:** 9:00 AM is ideal (cooler temps)
- **Duration:** 3-4 hours total
- **E-bike rentals:** We Cycle (they deliver right to your accommodations!)
- **Cost:** ~\$35-50
- **Route suggestion:**
  - Start in Old Town
  - Ride through residential neighborhoods on south side
  - Head to Key West Tropical Forest & Botanical Garden
  - Loop back through New Town if energy permits
- **Botanical Garden:** \$15 admission, open 10 AM – 4 PM, peaceful and uncrowded, (5210 College Road)

### Lunch (1:00 PM – 2:30 PM)

**El Siboney:** Cuban food, locals' favorite, no reservations

### Afternoon (2:30 PM – 5:00 PM)

#### Relaxation options:

- Beach time at Fort Zachary Taylor State Park (best beach in Key West proper, \$6 per person entry)
  - Pool time at your accommodation
- Insider tip:* Ft. Zachary is a great place to watch the sunset.

### Dinner

- Cook your fresh catch if you went fishing (ask your accommodation if they have grills)
- **Conch Republic Seafood Company:** Waterfront, casual, live music

# Day 3

## Dry Tortugas National Park

### The Logistics

**Ferry:** Yankee Freedom III (only commercial option)

- **Departure:** 8:00 AM from Key West (check-in at 7:15 AM)
- **Return:** Arrives back ~5:15 PM
- **Cost:** ~\$195 adults, \$135 kids (includes park entry)
- **Book at:** [drytortugas.com](http://drytortugas.com) or call (800) 634-0939
- **Book early:** This sells out, especially March–July

#### What's Included

- Round-trip ferry (2+ hours each way)
- Breakfast (pastries, coffee, fruit)
- Lunch (sandwich, chips, and drink)
- Snorkel gear rental
- Guided tour of Fort Jefferson

#### What to Bring

- Reef-safe sunscreen (required)
- Hat, sunglasses, towel
- Underwater camera
- Refillable water bottle
- Seasickness meds (the ride can be choppy)
- Cash for bar on ferry

### Schedule

**7:15 AM:** Check in at Historic Seaport (100 Grinnell Street)

**8:00 AM:** Depart Key West. Watch for dolphins! They often ride the bow wake.

**10:30 AM:** Arrive at Dry Tortugas. The fort comes into view about 15 minutes before docking—have your camera ready.

**10:30 AM – 2:45 PM:** Free time to explore

- Take the 45-minute guided tour of Fort Jefferson (highly recommend—starts shortly after arrival)
- Snorkel the moat wall (the best snorkeling, crystal clear water, tropical fish, sea turtles)
- Explore the fort on your own
- Beach time on the white sand
- Bird watching (it's a major bird sanctuary)

**11:00 AM – 1:00 PM:** Lunch served on the ferry (you can eat on the boat or take it to the beach)

**2:45 PM:** All aboard for the return trip

**5:15 PM:** Return to Key West

### Dinner

- **Hogfish Bar & Grill:** Very casual, on Stock Island (15 min drive), famous Hogfish sandwich

# Day 4

## Bahia Honda State Park

### Morning (Depart by 9:00 AM)

#### Getting There:

- **Location:** Mile Marker 37 (about 35 miles from Key West)
  - **Drive time:** 45 minutes
  - **Entry fee:** \$8 per vehicle + \$2 per person
- Insider tip:* Go early. The park limits capacity and closes when full, especially on weekends.

### What to Do (9:30 AM – 3:00 PM)

#### Beach Time at Sandspur Beach

- Consistently rated one of America's best beaches
- Soft white sand (rare in the Keys)
- Calm, clear water perfect for swimming
- **Bring:** Beach chairs/umbrella, cooler, snacks, books, floaties

#### Other Activities:

- **Snorkeling:** Decent near the shore, good for beginners
- **Kayaking:** Rentals available at the park [bahiahondapark.com](http://bahiahondapark.com)
- **Paddleboarding:** Also available for rent
- **Hiking:** Short nature trail through tropical hammock (great bird watching)
- **Old Bahia Honda Bridge:** Walk out on the old railroad bridge for views and photos

### Lunch

#### Options:

- Pack a picnic (there are pavilions and grills)
- **Concession stand at park:** Hot dogs, sandwiches, snacks
- **No Name Pub:** On the way back (MM 30 on Big Pine Key), famous pizza, quirky atmosphere

### Final Evening in Key West

- **Sunset:** Find your favorite spot or try somewhere new
- Maybe one last Duval Street stroll or souvenir shopping

### Dinner—Go Out With a Bang

- **Cafe Marquesa:** Upscale, romantic, consistently excellent (reservations essential)
- **Hot Tin Roof:** Upscale Southern fusion, craft cocktails

# Bonus Tips & *Insider Knowledge*



*Adventure*  
RACHAEL

## Money Savers

- Happy hours are generous in Key West (many 4-7 PM)
- Lunch menus are often cheaper than dinner at the same restaurants
- Free Duval Loop trolley runs north-south on Duval
- Many beaches and parks are free or low-cost
- Bring your own snorkel gear to save on rentals

## Best Photo Spots

- Southernmost Point (obvious but required)
- Fort Zachary Taylor beach at sunset
- Dry Tortugas from the ferry as you approach
- Colorful houses in Bahama Village neighborhood
- Key West Cemetery (quirky epitaphs, beautiful at golden hour)

## Things We Wish We'd Known

- Restaurants can have waits even with reservations—Key West runs on island time
- The roosters are loud. Everywhere. Accept it.
- Parking in Old Town is a nightmare—walk or bike whenever possible
- Reef-safe sunscreen isn't just recommended, it's required at many snorkel sites
- Book Dry Tortugas the moment you finalize your travel dates

## Additional Activities

- Scuba diving (Looe Key Reef is incredible)
- Key West Ghost Tour or Shipwreck Museum
- Rent a boat for a day
- Key West Aquarium
- [National Key Deer Refuge](#)

# Final *Thoughts*



Key West rewards those who balance tourist attractions with genuine exploration. Yes, do the Hemingway House and Mallory Square. But also bike through quiet neighborhoods, talk to locals at the bar, and spend a full day doing nothing at Bahia Honda.

The island operates on a different frequency. Lean into it. Let the roosters wake you up. Stay for one more sunset. Order another key lime pie.

You're at the end of the road. There's nowhere left to rush to.

Questions about this itinerary? Email us at [okienomads@gmail.com](mailto:okienomads@gmail.com) and we'll help you plan the perfect Key West adventure.