

Key West in 3 Nights: Chasing the Right-Side-of-the-Island Sunset

o) Your Details at a Glance

Item	Detail
Dates	Thursday, October 15 to Sunday, October 18, 2026 (3 nights)
Group	2 adults
Budget	Up to \$1,800 total
Must-haves	Old Town lodging, walkable, with a pool; bike around; snorkel trip; Hemingway Home; a real sunset every single evening
Special requests	Sunset spots with compass direction and exact set times for mid-October, Mallory Square vs. quieter west-facing alternatives, when to arrive, and a sunset sail with the operator's real departure time
Arriving via	Flying into Key West International (EYW)
Food targets	Conch fritters, key lime pie, fresh fish

A quick, honest heads-up before the fun part: Key West in season is not cheap, and a walkable Old Town hotel with a pool is the single biggest line item. At \$1,800 total for 3 nights, lodging will likely eat 55 to 80 percent of the budget. I have built the plan to make that math work, and flagged where to trade down if you would rather spend on experiences. More on that in section 3.

1) At a Glance

Topic	The plan
Base	Old Town, walking distance to Duval Street, Mallory Square and the Historic Seaport, with a pool
Getting around	Bikes (Key West is famously flat and tiny, about 2 miles wide) plus your own two feet
Sunset, the core mission	The sun sets in the WEST (compass bearing roughly 260 to 265°, just south of due west in mid-October). You want to face west-to-southwest. Mallory Square points the right way but is crowded; I give you quieter west-facing options below

Topic	The plan
Exact sunset times	Thu Oct 15: 7:03 PM · Fri Oct 16: 7:02 PM · Sat Oct 17: 7:01 PM · Sun Oct 18: 7:00 PM (Key West, EDT)
Snorkel	Morning reef trip by catamaran, from about \$44/person
Hemingway Home	\$19/adult, open 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM daily, tours every 15 minutes
Sunset sail	Operator's real departure time is 7:00 PM (check-in 6:30 PM), from about \$47/person

Compass reality check for your "wrong side of the island" problem: Key West's south shore (Smathers Beach, Southernmost Point, the Atlantic side) faces *south*, so the sun sets off to your right over land and rooftops, not the water. The classic sunset water views are all on the island's **west and northwest edge**: Mallory Square, the Historic Seaport, Fort Zachary Taylor beach, and the Sunset Pier area. Point yourself west-southwest and you are golden. Literally.

1b) Recommendation and the best alternative

Recommended base: Santa Maria Suites Resort (Old Town). It sits in Old Town a short walk off the lower Duval end, and its standout feature for you is **two outdoor heated pools set in gardens**, which directly answers your "with a pool" wish, plus it is walkable to the sunset action. As a guide value, expect roughly **\$300 to \$460 per night** for your October dates (as of June 2026, guide value only, live rates change daily). Why it fits: two adults who want to bike, swim, and stroll to sunset will appreciate a genuine Old Town location plus a real pool to melt into after a sweaty ride.

Best alternative: The Southernmost House (historic oceanfront). A Victorian mansion on the water with a pool right on the Atlantic; think quieter and more romantic. As a guide value, expect roughly **\$300 to \$470 per night**, plus a stated **\$30/night resort fee and 12.5% tax** (from the hotel's own site, as of June 2026). Trade-off: it is at the far south end near the Southernmost Point, so it is a longer (but very bikeable) hop to Mallory Square, and it faces south, not west, so it is a lovely base but not itself a sunset-viewing spot.

Budget-saver alternative: If you would rather protect the budget, a smaller Old Town guesthouse with a pool (many exist along Truman Ave and the side streets) typically runs lower than the two above. If you book any hotel toward the top of these ranges, you will blow past \$1,800 once tax and the sail are added, so read section 3 before you commit.

1c) Book Now

What	By when	Where / link
Hotel (Santa Maria Suites)	ASAP, October is peak season	santamariasuites.com
Hotel alternative (Southernmost House)	ASAP	southernmosthouse.com
Sunset sail (Fury Champagne Sunset Cruise, 7:00 PM)	7+ days ahead for best online rate	furycat.com/...

What	By when	Where / link
Morning snorkel (Fury or Sebago)	A few days ahead	furycat.com/... or keywestsebago.com/...
Bike rental (Eaton Bikes)	Reserve online, delivery available	eatonbikes.com/...
Hemingway Home	No reservation needed, walk-in	hemingwayhome.com/...

For both hotels: **You will see the binding price for your exact dates and occupancy at the provider's booking step, it changes daily.**

2) Day-by-Day Plan

Note on tipping: Key West runs on tips. Budget **15 to 20 percent** at restaurants and for your boat crews (the sunset sail and snorkel crews specifically note gratuity is customary and not included).

Day 1, Thursday, October 15 (Arrival + first sunset, sun sets 7:03 PM)

- Land at EYW. It is tiny and about 10 minutes / roughly 3 miles by taxi or rideshare from Old Town.
- Check in, change, and hit the pool to shake off the travel.
- Late afternoon: warm up your sunset legs with a short walk to **Mallory Square** for the nightly **Sunset Celebration** (street performers, food carts, the whole circus). Face west-southwest toward the water and Sunset Key.
- **Arrive by about 6:15 to 6:25 PM** (roughly 40 minutes before the 7:03 PM set) to claim a west-facing rail spot before the crowd thickens.
- Dinner nearby at the **Historic Seaport**.

💡 **Tip:** The performers at Mallory Square start wrapping up right at sunset, so the *best* people-watching is the 45 minutes *before* the sun drops, not after. Come early, watch the sword-swallower, then turn to the horizon.

☁️ **Plan B (clouds or a squall):** Duck under cover at a Historic Seaport bar with a west view, or shift two blocks to the **Sunset Pier / Ocean Key** area; the color show often still happens 10 to 20 minutes after the official set even on cloudy evenings.

Day 2, Friday, October 16 (Snorkel + Hemingway + sunset sail, sun sets 7:02 PM)

- **Morning: reef snorkel trip.** Fury's Key West Snorkeling catamaran departs **9:30 AM** (about 3 hours, from about \$44/person, beverages included). Sebago also runs reef snorkeling from the Historic Seaport as an alternative. You will snorkel the only living coral barrier reef in the continental US.
- Lunch back in town.

- **Afternoon: The Ernest Hemingway Home & Museum**, 907 Whitehead Street. Admission is **\$19/adult** (kids 6 to 12 are \$7, under 5 free), open **9:00 AM to 5:00 PM daily**, guided tours every 15 minutes starting at 9:15 AM, tickets at the main gate only, no reservations needed. Note there is a **3% fee on card and mobile payments**. Say hi to the roughly 60 six-toed cats.

- Map: [Open in maps](#)

- **Evening: the sunset sail (your special request, solved).** Fury's **Champagne Sunset Cruise** departs from the Historic Seaport at **7:00 PM** with **check-in at 6:30 PM**, runs 1.5 hours, from about **\$47/person** (beer, wine, champagne, and soda included; gratuity not included). The captain positions the 45-foot power catamaran for the best horizon view and typically sails past Mallory Square, Sunset Key, and Key West Harbor. That puts you *on* the water facing the sunset, which is the whole point of not standing on the wrong side of the island.
 - Departure point 3: corner of Greene St. and Elizabeth St., next to The Conch Republic Seafood Company.

💡 **Tip:** Book the sail 7+ days out online for Fury's lowest rate, and eat a light late lunch; snacks are allowed onboard (no glass) but food is not served on this particular cruise.

🌧️ **Plan B:** Fury runs 365 days a year and only cancels for genuinely unsafe weather; if they cancel, they rebook you during your stay or refund you. If seas are rough and you would rather stay on land, walk to **Fort Zachary Taylor** beach (west-facing) instead.

Day 3, Saturday, October 17 (Bike day + quiet-side sunset, sun sets 7:01 PM)

- **Pick up your bikes** from **Eaton Bikes, 830 Eaton Street**, open **Monday to Saturday 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM** (Sunday only until noon), phone (305) 294-8188. They rent Sun beach cruisers plus Trek FX 3 and Verve 2 hybrids, and offer contact-free delivery to your hotel. As a guide, single-speed cruisers commonly run in the **\$15 to \$20 per day** range in Key West; **confirm the exact daily rate and any deposit at their rate sheet or by phone before booking** (rate sheet: [eatonbikes.com/...](http://eatonbikes.com/)).
- Bike the island: the Southernmost Point marker, the shady lanes of Old Town, the Key West cemetery, and out to **Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park** for a swim on the best beach in town.
- **Sunset, the quieter west-facing option: Fort Zachary Taylor beach** faces west-southwest with a clean water horizon and a fraction of Mallory Square's crowd. The park gates close in the early evening, so confirm the day's closing time at the gate; if it closes before 7:01 PM, pivot to the **Edward B. Knight Pier (White Street Pier)** or the **Historic Seaport boardwalk**.

💡 **Tip:** Bikes plus sunset is a great combo, but pedaling in the dark on unfamiliar streets is less fun; bring the small clip lights Eaton offers, or plan to be rolling back by twilight (about 7:25 PM).

🌧️ **Plan B:** If it rains, swap the long bike loop for a covered lunch and the **Mel Fisher Maritime Museum** or a wander down Duval, then take the sunset from a covered Seaport bar.

Day 4, Sunday, October 18 (Departure, sun sets 7:00 PM if you linger)

- Return bikes (Eaton's Eaton St. shop opens 8:00 AM Sunday but closes at noon, so return early or arrange the night before).

- One last pool dip, grab a slice of key lime pie for the road, and head to EYW.
- 💡 **Tip:** EYW is small and lines can be slow at peak; arrive about 2 hours before your flight.

3) Practical Notes, Checklist & Cost Overview

Where to eat (all target conch fritters, fresh fish, and/or key lime pie)

- **Half Shell Raw Bar**, 231 Margaret Street, Historic Seaport. Casual Key West seafood institution, open **daily 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM**, with a happy hour roughly 4:30 to 6:30 PM. Great for conch, fresh fish baskets, and a slice of key lime pie. Walk-ins only.
 - Map: [Open in maps](#)
- **Conch Republic Seafood Company**, at the Historic Seaport right by the Fury sunset dock. Convenient for a pre-sail bite; conch fritters and fresh fish are the move. Check current hours before you go.
 - Map: [Open in maps](#)
- **Kermit's Key West Key Lime Shoppe**, Elizabeth Street at the Seaport, for the definitive key lime pie (and a slice dipped in chocolate on a stick). Check current hours before visiting.
 - Map: [Open in maps](#)

Checklist

- ☐ Reef-safe sunscreen (required feel on the reef, and kinder to the coral)
- ☐ Photo ID for the sail (needed for alcohol service)
- ☐ Book the 7:00 PM sunset sail 7+ days out for the best rate
- ☐ Reserve bikes online / arrange hotel delivery
- ☐ Cash for tips (boat crews, restaurants, 15 to 20 percent)
- ☐ Light rain layer (October can bring quick tropical showers)
- ☐ Confirm hotel resort fee + tax at booking

Estimated cost overview vs. your \$1,800 budget (2 adults)

Item	Estimate	Notes
Hotel, 3 nights	\$960 to \$1,380	Guide value, check the exact date price with the provider; before resort fee/tax
Resort fee + 12.5% tax	~\$90 to \$270	Southernmost House states \$30/night fee + 12.5% tax; Santa Maria fees vary, confirm at booking
Sunset sail (Fury), 2	~\$94+	From ~\$47/person; plus 15 to 20% crew tip
Morning snorkel, 2	~\$88+	From ~\$44/person; plus crew tip

Item	Estimate	Notes
Hemingway Home, 2	~\$39	\$19 x 2, plus 3% card fee
Bikes (2 bikes, ~2 days)	~\$60 to \$80	Confirm exact rate + deposit at Eaton Bikes
Food (3.5 days, 2 people)	~\$260 to \$400	Casual seafood + key lime pie, incl. tips
Airport transfers	~\$30 to \$50	Taxi/rideshare, EYW to Old Town
Running total	~\$1,620 to \$2,400	N/A

Honest budget reality: With a lower-end Old Town hotel night (around \$320) you land near **\$1,620 to \$1,750**, comfortably inside \$1,800. If you book either recommended hotel at the *top* of its range, the trip runs **\$2,100 to \$2,400** and you are over budget. Levers to pull: pick the budget-saver guesthouse, drop the snorkel *or* the sail (you can still watch a free sunset from Fort Zach or Mallory), or trim a restaurant dinner. The good news: your three sunsets, the Hemingway cats, and biking a flat little island cost almost nothing.

4) Sources (checked June 2026)

Sunset times

- [sunrise.maplogs.com/...](https://sunrise.maplogs.com/)

Attractions

- Ernest Hemingway Home & Museum (rates/hours): [hemingwayhome.com/...](https://hemingwayhome.com/)

Sunset sail & snorkel operators

- Fury Champagne Sunset Cruise (7:00 PM departure, pricing): [furycat.com/...](https://furycat.com/)
- Fury Key West Snorkeling (9:30 AM departure, pricing): [furycat.com/...](https://furycat.com/)
- Sebago Catamaran Champagne Sunset Sail (pricing): [keywestsebago.com/...](https://keywestsebago.com/)
- Sebago Snorkeling: [keywestsebago.com/...](https://keywestsebago.com/)

Bikes

- Eaton Bikes (hours, address, phone, fleet): eatonbikes.com and rate sheet: [eatonbikes.com/...](https://eatonbikes.com/)

Lodging

- Santa Maria Suites Resort: santamariasuites.com
- The Southernmost House (resort fee + tax): southernmosthouse.com

Food

- Half Shell Raw Bar (hours): halfshellrawbar.com

Enjoy the sunsets. This time you will be on the right side of the island, facing west-southwest, drink in hand, at exactly the right minute. 

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