

Travel

36 Hours in Key West, Fla.



At Turtle Kraals, which holds turtle races on Friday evenings.

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IT'S tough to slap an itinerary on [Key West](#). The whole point of this two-by-four-mile island, after all, is to kick off your shoes and let it all hang out. But here's the rub: do Key West wrong and you might not relax. Witness lower Duval Street, that cacophony of sound, sunburn and daiquiris. (Hemingway used to drink there, but he might think twice today.) So where is the strange, laid-back island that everyone fell in love with? It's still there, if you know where to look. It's found [biking](#) through Old Town at dusk, when the porches light up and jasmine fills the air. Or [kayaking](#) across the quiet, teal-blue ocean, or catching an old-timer's tale, drifting across a lonely bar. Done right, Key West is still a place where time stands still.

THE NEXT ISLAND OVER

The real Key West? It's not even on Key West proper anymore, but just over the Cow Key Channel Bridge, on the even tinier Stock Island. Follow Front Street past a row of old trailers, and you'll stumble upon a little miracle: the [Hogfish Bar and Grill](#) (6810 Front Street, 305-293-4041; www.hogfishbar.com), a big, clamoring seafood joint at a marina that is rumored to have been the headquarters for the Bay of Pigs operation. Grab a table by the water, and try a fresh hogfish sandwich (\$12.95), loaded with Swiss, mushroom and onion. Soak up the afternoon sun, toss some bread at the passing fish, and don't rush home. Local investors plan to develop this area over the next 10 years — they figure that when Cuba opens up, Stock Island will be the next Key West.