

Welcome to the Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum

(To follow this script, head into the room immediately to the right as you enter the home)

LIVING ROOM

Thank you for visiting the Key West home of legendary author and journalist, Ernest Hemingway. Ernest called Key West his home throughout the 1930s. The painted portrait on the wall between the windows is of Asa Tift (1812-1889), the original builder and resident of the home. Tift, a sea captain and marine architect, designed and built the mansion, which was completed in 1851. He and his family lived here until his death in 1889. By that time, Tift's wife and children had all succumbed to Yellow Fever, leaving no one to inherit the house and the surrounding one-acre property. The mansion sat deteriorating and empty for 40 years, the subject of numerous legal proceedings. On April 29, 1931, Ernest and his second wife, Pauline Pfeiffer, purchased the home and property with generous financial assistance from Pauline's uncle. Pauline was pregnant with their second child, and immediately began an extensive renovation and restoration of the home. Pauline had been a fashion editor at Vogue Magazine, and her keen eye and superlative taste continue to be evident in every room of the home. For example, notice the exquisite Italian Murano glass chandeliers in the living and dining rooms. (Pauline replaced ceiling fans with chandeliers, an elegant but not practical touch in the tropical climate.) Many of the furniture pieces on display were purchased by the Hemingway's in their international travels, such as the antique Spanish walnut "chest-on-chest." This unique piece was designed to hold jewelry and other valuables; the top portion could be detached for traveling. Note the fishing display on the far wall, including a replica of Hemingway's boat, The Pilar. The 38' Wheeler Shipyard "Playmate" was bought with a publishing advance and delivered to the island in late 1934. Hemingway was an avid fisherman throughout his life, and very much enjoyed fighting the marlin and tarpon along the Gulf Stream current that runs between Key West and Cuba. In fact, it was the world-class fishing in these waters that originally drew Hemingway to Key West, and in 1935 he reportedly won every fishing tournament in Key West, Havana, and Bimini. Ernest's Cuban friend Gregorio Fuentes, seen in the lithograph image with Ernest, captained The Pilar, and became a close fishing companion. Ultimately, Fuentes was the inspiration for Santiago, the protagonist of arguably Hemingway's most well-known novel, *The Old Man and The Sea*, published in 1952. The novel was awarded the Pulitzer Prize the following year, and led to Hemingway's 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature.

(Go across the hallway into the dining/kitchen area)

DINING ROOM

The antique furniture found in this room is 18th century Spanish walnut. The chair at the head of the table has a metal bar attached to the back that served as a resting place for swords, a common male accoutrement in the 1700s. Also note the device on display in the center of the credenza: this is an antique bottle lock used to secure one of the most prized resources of ship captains and writers alike—alcohol. The photographs above the

credenza are of Hemingway's four wives, and his life travels parallel his marriages. The top left hand photo is Hadley Richardson, his first wife. They met at a cocktail party while Hemingway was working as a journalist for the Chicago Sun. They were married in Michigan on September 3, 1921, and relocated to Paris shortly after. In Paris, they became part of a group of talented expatriate artists and writers, known as "The Lost Generation." Ernest and Hadley had one child, a son John, nicknamed Bumby (pictured at the top right). Ernest and Hadley would eventually divorce in 1927 after Hadley introduced her husband to her best friend at the time and Vogue fashion editor, Pauline Pfeiffer. The two would start a torrid love affair. Pauline became Ernest's second wife on May 10, 1927, just a few months after his divorce from Hadley was finalized on January 27, 1927. Ernest and Pauline travelled to Key West where Pauline's Uncle Gus later bought them this estate at an auction for \$8,000 dollars. As noted previously, the chandelier in this room is hand-blown Murano glass, which Pauline imported from Italy. They would make this house their home until their divorce in 1940. They raised two sons here, Patrick and Gregory, pictured to the right holding Snow White, Hemingway's first polydactyl cat. While still married to Pauline, Ernest began an affair with a lovely, blond war correspondent he met at the local bar, Sloppy Joe's. Martha Gellhorn, pictured in the photograph on the bottom left-hand side, was already a renowned writer and journalist at the time she met Hemingway. Gellhorn was charismatic and goal-oriented; remarkably, she was a correspondent in every war during her lifetime, from the Spanish Civil War in 1937 to the Gulf War in 1991. Ernest and Pauline were divorced in November 1940, and Martha and Ernest were married by the end of that December. The newlyweds moved to Cuba. Their happiness, however, was short-lived. By 1943, professional jealousies and disagreements clouded their relationship, and they were divorced in 1945. Hemingway's fourth and last wife was Time Magazine writer, Mary Welsh, pictured in the bottom right-hand corner. They wed in 1946 and lived at Finca Vigia, Hemingway's estate in Cuba, and in Ketchum, Idaho until Hemingway's death in 1961. Ernest and Mary enjoyed many of the same hobbies—fishing, hunting, and skiing—which laid a foundation for his longest marriage. Before exiting the dining room, note the portrait above the fireplace of a young Ernest Hemingway. This oil painting of Hemingway in his 30s is emblematic of his time here in Key West, more so than the popular iconic, bearded images of an older Hemingway.

KITCHEN

The kitchen as displayed was remodeled as part of Pauline's major renovation of the home upon moving in. Before this kitchen was installed, the original cookhouse was outdoors, like many early southern homes. The kitchen counters, sink, and stove are higher than standard height to accommodate Hemingway's stature. He enjoyed cleaning and preparing the fish he caught daily, and the higher-than-average fixtures allowed him to do this and not put strain on his bad back. The tiles decorating the kitchen walls are Portuguese. The modern refrigerator—a luxury in the tropics—was also installed in the 1930s.

(Continue upstairs and into the room on your left)

NURSEMAID'S ROOM

This was the room of Patrick and Gregory's nanny, Ada. She was originally from Germany and lived here, taking care of the boys until their maturity. After she left the residence, Pauline used this space for sewing and other projects. Pictured on the walls are contemporaries of Hemingway, many of them from "The Lost Generation. They were significant characters in his life during Hemingway's Paris years. This collection of brilliant minds included Pablo Picasso, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, Sylvia Beach, and Salvador Dali. Hemingway's Paris lifestyle was far different from his early life in Oak Park, Illinois. Ernest was the second of six children of Clarence and Grace Hemingway. Clarence was a pediatrician and Grace was a homemaker who spent free time singing and giving music lessons. From a young age, Hemingway set his sights on traveling and left his hometown shortly after graduating high school when he accepted his first writing job with the Kansas City Star. The rigorous and meticulous grammar, punctuation, and stylistic requirements of the newspaper helped develop Ernest's unique writing style. Above the fireplace is a larger photo of Hemingway, with a sizable scar on his forehead; he was injured when he pulled the chain from a skylight, and it fell on his head. The bathroom attached to this room was part of the home's original design; there was a cistern built on the roof to supply water before indoor plumbing was available—highly unusual for 19th century homes. The bathroom wall décor was replaced by Pauline with these tiles imported from Paris, France.

(continue through the entryway that connects with the adjacent room)

BOYS' ROOM

This room was shared by the Hemingway sons, Patrick and Gregory. The displays in the room relate to some extraordinary experiences in Hemingway's life. During World War I, 19-year-old Hemingway volunteered with the American Red Cross in Italy as an ambulance driver. On July 8, 1918, in Fossalta, Italy, Ernest's unit was bombarded with heavy fire, and he was hit with dozens of shrapnel shards in his legs. In an act of great bravery and duty, Ernest, bleeding from both legs, carried a wounded man over his shoulder back to the command center. He would spend months recovering in a Milan hospital. While hospitalized Ernest was cared for by a nurse named Agnes Von Kurowsky. Ernest fell for her quickly and deeply. Unfortunately, upon his return to the United States, Ernest received a letter from Agnes declining his affections. Hemingway would eventually mend his broken heart by writing about it. His novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, includes the character of a young nurse named Catherine Barkley; Hemingway based the Barkley character on his unrequited love, Agnes. (If you've read it then you'll understand the phrase "writer's revenge.") Hemingway participated as a war correspondent alongside the 22nd Infantry in World War II. Although he did not find great love this time around, he did find great reward. He was given the Bronze Star by the War Department for his contributions. His wife at the time, Martha Gellhorn, was also reporting from the front lines of WWII. She was one of the first five correspondents (and the only woman) on the beach in Normandy on D-Day in 1944,

memorialized in the photograph on the wall. Also pictured are some of his prized catches from the waters around Key West and Cuba. Hemingway was introduced to fishing in the Gulf Stream in 1928 and was "hooked." He chartered a boat owned by local barkeep, "Sloppy Joe" Russell, until he bought The Pilar in 1934. He was a true sportsman, an avid hunter as well as a fisherman. He enjoyed, and was inspired by, hunting safaris across Africa. The most famous of those excursions was a 1954 Christmas gift for his fourth wife, Mary Welsh. They took a photo safari over the Nile Region of Africa, photographing and observing the wildlife. The trip continued south to Victoria Falls, but it was cut short when the sightseeing plane crashed. Fortunately, no one onboard suffered injuries and they were rescued by another tour group on the ground. In a wild turn of events, the plane they boarded shortly thereafter to leave the area burst into flames upon takeoff. The couple and the pilot sustained injuries, and some publications back in the states had even begun inaccurately reporting the death of Ernest and Mary. Ernest's injuries were so severe that he remained hospitalized when he received the Nobel Prize for literature and had to record his acceptance speech from his hospital bed. He would suffer the residual effects of those injuries for the rest of his life.

(enter the final room on this level located across the hallway)

MASTER BEDROOM

This room was the Hemingway's master bedroom in the mansion. The headboard is a souvenir from one of their trips to Spain: a wooden gate from a 17th century Spanish monastery. Note that the original gate hinges are still attached. The art above the bed is an original oil painting by former Key West resident, Henry Faulkner. Faulkner was a renowned 20th century artist from Kentucky who moved to Key West. He was an eccentric character and quickly became well-known for roaming around the island with his goat, Alice. After the home was opened as a museum, Faulkner was commissioned by the museum owner, Bernice Dixon, to paint this rendition of the mansion. The two unique pieces of furniture at the foot of the bed are a midwife chair and a birthing chair from 18th century Spain. There is another set of these artifacts in the Nursemaid's bathroom. Hemingway said the birthing chairs made good fishing seats: the handle affixed to the top made them easy to transport to the piers and docks. Note the ceramic cat perched on the furniture near the bathroom. This is a replica of an original cat sculpture given to Hemingway by his friend, Pablo Picasso.

(exit through the double doors to continue with the outdoor portion of this script)

VERANDA

The wrap-around porch, or veranda, offers spectacular views of the garden and the lighthouse across the street. We host weddings and events regularly in the garden space you see below. The grounds are a beautiful backdrop during the evening hours. As you make your way around the front of the house you can see the fountain below at the front entry walk of the home. From this elevated view you can see the fountain has the outlines of a ship. This was intentionally designed that way by original owner, Asa Tift, as a symbol of his various maritime trades.

(continue down the stairs to explore the gardens)

GARDENS and WRITING STUDIO

Note that some of the pathways are created from Baltimore Bricks. These bricks also line certain roads in downtown Key West. They were given to the island as part of a stimulus initiative during the Great Depression of the 1930's. When the city resurfaced streets, Hemingway purchased a large amount of the bricks from the city, and he and his friends used them to construct the fence that now borders the property. The building just behind the main house was originally a hay loft; Hemingway converted the upstairs room into a writing studio. The viewing space is limited so please consider others when you go up the stairs to see the room. Note Hemingway's Royal typewriter, still on the table. There once was a metal catwalk that stretched from the veranda to the entrance of the writing studio. Each day, Hemingway would wake at 6:00 am and head across to his writing room and work until noon. Then he would head out for fishing or other entertainment in the afternoons and evenings. His years in Key West were very productive. He completed several novels here: *A Farewell to Arms*, *To Have and Have Not*, *Death in the Afternoon*, *Green Hills of Africa*, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, and *Men Without Women*, as well as a large portion of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

CATS

The Museum maintains a population of cats that are the rightful residents of the property now. They are descendants of Snow White, the first polydactyl cat introduced to the property by Hemingway. Snow White was given to Hemingway by wrecker and salvager, Captain Stanley Dexter. The cats are named after famous people from Hemingway's lifetime, such as Isadora Duncan, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, and Duke Ellington. The polydactyl cats, also known as six-toed cats or mitten cats are visited once a week by our veterinarian to ensure the cats are happy and healthy.

SWIMMING POOL

This swimming pool was the first residential pool on the island, and it remains the largest. Pauline had the pool built in 1938 while Hemingway was on assignment in Spain. The pool, like the home, was laboriously dug out of the island's coral and limestone bedrock. Prior to the pool construction, Hemingway had a boxing ring located in this area of the yard. Hemingway was a huge boxing enthusiast and would spar with locals in his private ring. When he returned from Spain to find that his boxing ring had been replaced with a pool, and that the pool had cost over \$20,000 dollars, he was less than pleased. Reportedly, Hemingway took a penny from his pocket, flicked it in Pauline's direction and exclaimed, "You might as well take my last red cent!" Pauline knew the story would get lots of laughs amongst her visitor and decided to preserve that 1934 penny in the concrete. It is still visible on the patio near pool, right at the base of the green post.

CAT FOUNTAIN

The large olive jar just behind the main house serves as one of the many watering holes available to the cats on our property. It is unique in that the base is a men's urinal from the original Sloppy Joe's Bar, located on Green Street. (That location is now Capt. Tony's Saloon). When the rent was raised, owner Joe Russell, decided to move his bar to its current location on the corner of Green and Duval Streets. Russell gutted the original location and in the process Hemingway, figuring he'd poured enough money down its drain, felt he earned the porcelain memento. Upon bringing it back here Pauline did her best to disguise it with the tiles you see around it today.

BASEMENT (No Access to the Public)

It is extremely uncommon in the Florida Keys to find basements like this one; it is simply too difficult to excavate the hard coral and limestone bedrock. The limestone dug from this foundation was used to construct the home. On the back porch of the home is a large block, similar to those used during the construction. Hemingway used the basement primarily as a wine cellar.

Later in his life, Hemingway faced the same struggles as his father and other relatives had with mental health issues. He battled depression, and in 1960 sought treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. In January 1961, the U.S. severed relations with Cuba, and Hemingway was unable to return to his Cuban estate, leaving behind many of his manuscripts and unfinished works, which possibly further contributed to his depression.

Ernest Miller Hemingway passed away in Ketchum, Idaho on July 2, 1961, as a result of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

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The Ernest Hemingway Home & Museum