

100 Bars in 100 Days

Hops MacBarley's 2012 Key West Bar Boondoggle
"The Peace, Love, and I.P.A. Tour"

BAR 28:

The Top, Crown Plaza La Concha Hotel
www.laconchakeywest.com/html/keywest-dining.asp

430 Duval Street

Wednesday 8/15, 7:45 pm

Red Hook I.P.A. (draft)

This seemed like a good evening to get high atop Key West and enjoy the downing of both beer and sun. There were some clouds on the horizon that would be getting in the way, but not enough to kill the event. Besides, how often do you get to see the sun set??

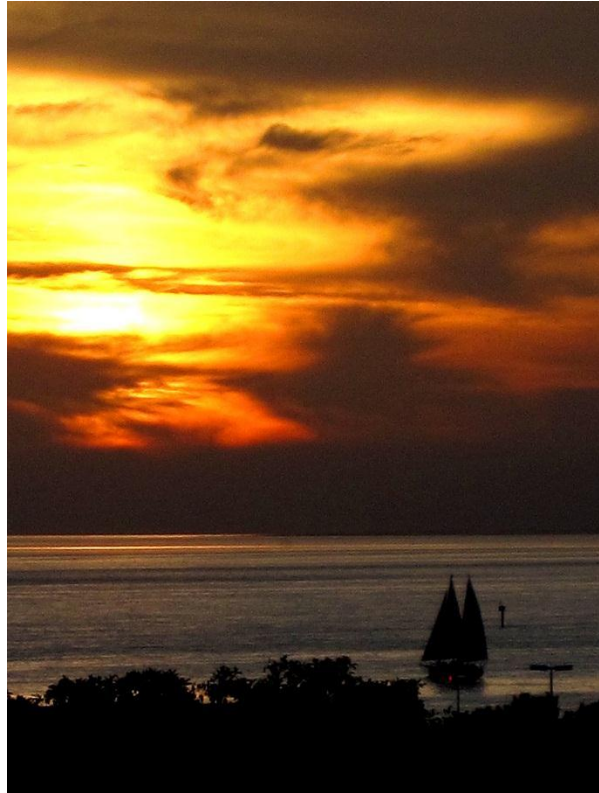
Clouds often make the sunset anyway, don't they? Think about all the best sunset shots you've ever seen, and most have them have layers of clouds for the sun's rays to splash into. In fact, clouds are what give the sky its colors, often even long after old Sol has vanished.

The rooftop bar at the La Concha is the highest point in Key West. At a nosebleeding altitude of 80 feet or so, it towers over land and sea. It's kinda like Taj Dubai in that regard.

On the ground floor elevator panel, there is a small but very cool sign for The Top. It's done in layers, with a brushed gold metallic surface, cut-out letters, and a nice sailboat-at-sunset image showing through the empty O. I thought it looked extra cool because *I made the damn thing!* Ha! I love seeing my stuff around town.

There was a bit of urgency to this visit since I was running behind schedule. My post-work swim workout kicked the crap out of me, so I was lagging. There was Questing to do, though, damn it, and Quest I would. I ralled Trekkie into gear and pedaled the two miles to the 400 block of Duval.

The elevators up to The Top (as well as the six floors en route) are small! Two girls and me in there and it felt crowded. Claustrophobes must freak in here. Even with all the mirrored walls, it doesn't feel bigger; it just looks like there are three times as many people.



Sunset this night was scheduled for 8:00 pm. Nice tidy number. With the clouds, I figured Mister Sun would vanish about 7:50 or so. So there was a full ten minutes to spare when the elevator disgorged me, conveniently, right at the top floor bar. Serendipity, baby.



I don't think I have ever seen a less cluttered bar. It was wide open. I felt like playing shuffleboard on it. There were a few things sitting on it, but most bars have all these stupid ads and tents and condiment crap all over them. I used to hate when my bar manager would come in with more shit and say, *Here, spread these around on your bar*, like there's not enough useless garbage in the way already. More stuff for the customers to screw around with. People who were like me, at least.

I used to be notorious for messing with the table tents. Wherever I go, I bring a pen, because you never know when you'll get the opportunity to goose the world. When the staff was not watching, I'd take the table tent, unfold it – after solving that clever locking pattern on the bottom – fill the blank inner panels with drawings or insults or even stories. I usually kept it clean just in case my mom showed up at that bar and nosily opened up the table tent, but I'd put something like *What the hell are looking in here for, you dumbass??* Or a drawing of a fist with the middle finger extended.



One time, I wrote this crazy story. It started on one panel and ran down the next. At the crucial point in the tale, I wrote, *Continued on next tent*. Ha. No, of course I didn't continue it.

And, yeah, I realize that, most likely, nobody ever even laid eyes on it, but if someone did, and if someone read it... ahhh, never mind.

So, The Top's barkeep poured me my Hook, and I went out to join the sunset fans.

Looking down from the top of a tall building is cool. The taller, the better, of course, but LaConcha was gonna hafta do on this night. I've been up on the Empire State Building, the Sears Tower (or whatever it's called now), and even had the good fortune of being up in the World Trade Center tower on one of the rare days when the wind was light enough that they let us out on the roof.



You won't get me near the edge if there's not a wall, fence, or window there, but if it's secure, I'll stare down at the ground waaaaaay down there for a long time. It's not as wowing gazing down on Key West from less than 100 feet, but it's still cool. The clock in the Old City Hall tower stands out more as the daylight wanes. The Lighthouse seems oddly far inland. St. Paul's Church is nestled in its nest of Poinciana. In fact, it's refreshing to see just how green and wooded the island looks.

Wynn has a great photo of her sitting in this glass cube that has been built onto the side of the skywalk of The Sears Tower. Hey, Wynn, I'm gonna borrow that pic, and show it to my reader, K?

All the seats at The Top were taken. No surprise. They were all claimed well before I even left the house. What are there, like 30 seats at those little tables? Plus all the stools that got dragged out here from the inside bar. Might as well; there's nobody inside looking for a seat. But for us tardy turds, take a stand.

Fifty people can make a lot of noise, but there was a respectful hush up here. Conversations were at a low murmur. Occasional out-loud laughs popped up, but faded quickly. It's not a rowdy time.

As the sun neared the horizon, it encountered clouds. The mix was good, though. Some high white cirrus wisps made for good wide-angle shots (below). There were some good blast-throughs in the low-down clutter, and some late fireballs in the swirls (see top photo). All it lacked was the slow sizzzzzle as the glowing orb hit the water. And, of course, the green flash.

There was never a thought of a second beer. I have no idea how long any of these other people stayed, but as soon as it was obvious that there would be no good afterglow show, I beat the crowd to the tiny elevator and got my ass down to the thick breathable air of street level.



