



Miami



South Florida's pulsating beach city brims with Art Deco and classy hotels

Created as recently as 1896, cosmopolitan Miami has now mushroomed into a multitude of sprawling districts. In this Factfile, we focus on the vibrant South Beach area of Miami Beach – the hotspot for tourists and home to one of the world's largest collections of Art Deco buildings – as well as the grittier Downtown area.



GETTING THERE

The only direct flights in the UK to Miami are from London Heathrow. Flight time is between 8 hours (from Miami) and 10 hours (from London). Return fares for April 2008 were from £378 (American Airlines) in Nov 2007. American Airlines, www.aa.com British Airways, www.ba.com Virgin Atlantic, www.virgin-atlantic.com

TOUR OPERATORS

American Sky
www.americansky.co.uk
Bon Voyage

www.bon-voyage.co.uk
First Class Holidays
www.1stclassholidays.com
Funway
www.funwayholidays.co.uk
Hayes & Jarvis
www.hayesandjarvis.co.uk
Jetlife www.jetlife.com
Kenwood Travel
www.kenwoodtravel.com
Kuoni www.kuoni.co.uk
Trailfinders
www.trailfinders.com
United Vacations
www.unitedvacations.co.uk
Virgin Holidays
www.virginholidays.com

GETTING AROUND

- Airport-South Beach: none of the hotels we recommend offer their own transport but the Supershuttle bus (found at basement level) drops off at requested South Beach hotels (\$20 per person one-way). Taxis from the airport cost \$32.
- It's not worth hiring a car unless you plan to explore further afield,

such as to the Keys; you won't need one in the Miami Beach area and hotel parking usually costs \$25 a day or more.

■ The South Beach Local bus loops around the district every 15 minutes (\$0.25) while several other buses go along Collins and Washington Avenues (\$1.50). See www.miamidade.gov/transit.



GOOD PLACES TO STAY

All hotels listed here are open year-round and accept Mastercard, Visa and American Express. Many Miami hotels offer rooms adapted for wheelchair-bound travellers.

HOTELS UNDER £100

Colony Hotel

Tel 305 673 0088
www.colonymiami.com
This simple but stylish hotel in a great location along Ocean Drive has a restaurant, free beach towels and live music at weekends. No rooms adapted for wheelchairs.
● £58



Holiday Inn

Tel 305 371 4400
www.holidayinn.com/portofmiami
Conveniently close for those taking a cruise, this 200-room chain hotel by the Port of Miami in Downtown offers useful facilities such as a pool, gym, launderette and free computer use.
● £71. Tour operator: Kenwood Travel

Sadigo Court

Tel 305 672 9135
www.sadigocourt.com
Amber the poodle may greet you at this secluded, self-catering bolthole on 20th Street which offers breakfast, free internet access and suites with smart classical, British-style bedrooms. No rooms specially adapted for wheelchairs.
● £84 B&B



TIPS

- When comparing hotel prices online or by phone, check the smallprint. Breakfast is rarely included and the initial room rate usually omits the compulsory taxes of around 13%.
- Watch out for an extra resort fee (\$5-\$13 a day) that several South Beach hotels cheekily add on – for this you may get extras like happy hour drinks and beach loungers.

HOTELS £100-£150

Hotel Impala

Tel 305 673 2021
www.hotelimpalamiamibeach.com
The 17 bedrooms at this Mediterranean-style romantic retreat on Collins Avenue have chunky wood furniture with iron floral designs, and perhaps sumptuous sleigh beds and bamboo toiletries boxes. A bookcase of novels and evening candles enhance the reception hall. Free loungers are offered a mile or so away at Nikki Beach.
● £106 B&B

The Park Central

Tel 305 538 1611
www.theparkcentral.com
Inside this charming Art Deco hotel on Ocean Drive, the corridors sport many bygone black and white photos of beach life, and bathrooms have original tiles. Facilities include two restaurants, a small pool, rooftop sundeck, free computer use and beach loungers across the road. Six rooms are adapted for wheelchairs.
● £133. Tour ops: Bon Voyage, Funway, Hayes & Jarvis, Trailfinders, United Vacations, Virgin Holidays



Winterhaven

Tel 305 604 0016
www.winterhavenhotelsobe.com
Many of the rooms have ocean views and are decently sized. Facilities include a rooftop sundeck, and (when paying the \$7.49 daily resort fee) a small buffet breakfast, afternoon snacks, daily cocktail and beach chairs.
● £111 B&B. Tour operators: Hayes & Jarvis, Jetlife, Trailfinders

HOTELS OVER £150

National

Tel 305 532 2311
www.nationalhotel.com
North of Lincoln Road on Collins Avenue and neighbour to the Sagamore, the National has bags of age-old character, a striking pool and direct access to the beach. Other facilities include a French restaurant, gym, free yoga (Fri-Sun), bicycle rental, an ATM and 11 rooms adapted for wheelchairs.
● £206. Tour operators: Bon Voyage, First Class Holidays, Kuoni



Raleigh

Tel 305 534 6300
www.raleighhotel.com
Refined, colonial-inspired public areas are enhanced by splendid grounds (with appealing cabanas and pool) that lead right onto the beach (free loungers here).
● £203

Sagamore

Tel 305 535 8088
www.sagamorehotel.com
Artworks fill the public areas of this snow white minimalist hotel, which also has a pool, gym and spa centre, direct beach access (free loungers here) and six bedrooms adapted for wheelchairs.
● £246. Tour operators: Bon Voyage, Trailfinders



Prices here are for the cheapest room for two people (without breakfast unless stated) in April 2008, including taxes and fees, as found on the hotels' websites in November 2007. Room rates constantly change according to demand, but prices tend to be higher than these during the winter and at weekends, and can go much lower during the hurricane season.



GOOD THINGS TO SEE AND DO

1

South Beach

Miami's main draw for visitors is its Atlantic beach of coarse, beige sand stretching for miles. Behind the long, thin line of dunes south of 15th Street, Lummus Park is dotted with sandy playgrounds and volleyball nets. There are plenty of loungers for rent (\$30 a

day for two loungers and a parasol) and a few snack cabins on the beach. Every 100 metres or so, lifeguards keep watch.



4

Wolfsonian Museum

1001 Washington Avenue
www.wolfsonian.org

Behind the imposing façade of ornate, scalloped plasterwork, the Wolfsonian houses a fine, permanent collection of British and European artefacts, mainly from the first half of the 20th century. It includes exhibits from world fairs, a 1920s, skyscraper-themed bookcase, utilitarian items such as an old gas range and 1907 phone, and Nazi propaganda postcards. There are several temporary exhibitions as well. Also noteworthy is the mirror-arched, domed lift with its mock gargoyles. Admission \$7.49. Free on Fri 6pm-9pm.

2

Art Deco walk

South Beach has more than 800 examples of Art Deco packed into an easily walkable area. Almost every building along Ocean Drive (between 5th and 15th Streets) shows a version of the trademark vertical and horizontal bands, eyebrow window shades, portholes and finials, often in a striking pastel hue. Stroll along Collins Avenue to look up and admire dozens more, such as the Essex House Hotel. Walking tours (\$20) are led by the Miami Design Preservation League on most days, starting from the Art Deco Welcome Center on Ocean Drive. You can also pick up self-guided audio tours here (www.mdpl.org).

5

Lincoln Road

This long, mainly pedestrianised, strip, lined with palms, bamboo stands and bar and restaurant terraces, is a buzz of activity, particularly in the evening. Some of the building facades are examples of MiMo architecture, the style which followed Art Deco in the 1950s, featuring stepped gables, floral swirls and chevrons. As well as the many stores, there are galleries and the studios of the ArtCenter, which is free of charge to nose around (www.artcentersf.org). Nearby Española Way is also worth a quick look; here galleries and European restaurants sit under the awnings and iron balconies of pink Mediterranean-style buildings.

3

Explore Downtown

This district is well worth a visit, especially if you are waiting to take a cruise or flight. After riding the free Metromover train for an overview loop of the area's skyscrapers, walk down Flagler Street to check out architectural delights such as the Gusman Theater (Baroque-style plasterwork) and Alfred I Dupont Building (gilt lift doors decorated with palms and flamingos and a splendidly ornate former banking hall upstairs). Other distinctive landmarks include the Italianate Freedom Tower (on Biscayne Boulevard), the charmingly austere Federal Courthouse and blancmange-pink Gesu church (both on SE 1st Avenue). Finish off with a stroll around the Bayside Marketplace in the park opposite Holiday Inn, where stalls offer Everglades tours and boat trips around the Bay.

6

Historical Museum of Southern Florida

101 West Flagler Street www.hmsf.org

The city was 'born' in 1896, but the excellent, permanent exhibition here begins its chronology of the region much earlier with ancient fossils. It's informative yet entertaining and kids should enjoy items like the mock fort and old trolley car. Displays include 16th-century firearms, an explanation of Seminole tribe culture and relocation, and a video set in an Art Deco cinema.

Admission \$8.



SHOPPING

■ South Beach shoppers have the greatest choice along Lincoln Road (upmarket clothes and jewellery shops and chain stores like Quiksilver and French Connection), but Collins Avenue also has several clothes stores such as Tommy Hilfiger and Banana Republic. The tiny Española Way is home to several boutiques and a weekend craft market. In Downtown, opposite the Holiday Inn

and close to the cruise terminals, the Bayside Marketplace has more than 100 shops, mainly familiar chains such as Gap and Foot Locker (www.baysidemarketplace.com).

Further north of Miami Beach, Bal Harbour mall offers designer boutiques (www.balharbourshops.com) and the huge Aventura Mall includes Macy's and other chain stores (www.shopaventuramall.com).



GOOD PLACES TO EAT (AT SOUTH BEACH)

1

Café Papillon

Tel 305 673 1139
Early 20th-century French posters and chandeliers adorn the interior, but you may prefer to people-watch out on the Lincoln Road terrace. Although the menu has typically French options like moules marinières in white wine sauce, niçoise salad, filet mignon and creme brulee, also available are tasty pasta dishes and Greek salads. Portions are huge. Mains \$12-\$30.

2

News Café

Tel 305 538 6397
Whether you order eggs Benedict, French toast with strawberries or the \$10 Continental special (orange juice, coffee and a basket of sweet croissants, rolls and pastries), expect big portions at this great people-watching spot on Ocean Drive across from Lummus Park. You can buy British newspapers and magazines from the store here and sit out on a lovely tree-shaded patio.

3

Puerto Sagua

Tel 305 673 1115
Get a taste of Cuba without needing to visit Little Havana. There's a lively atmosphere at this café on Collins Avenue (near 7th St) which serves dishes like fried yucca, Palomilla steak or lobster enchilada with rice and black beans. Mains \$8-\$27. Another ethnic eatery worth a visit is nearby Tap Tap (Tel 305 672 2898), an informal Haitian restaurant on 5th St with colourful murals and dishes such as conch fritters, shrimp in Creole sauce and sweet potato pie. Mains \$8-\$19.

4

Spiga

Tel 305 534 0079
www.spigarestaurant.com
Candlelit tables and Italian city etchings set the scene at this classy restaurant attached to the Impala hotel with an outside patio. We had rich, filling, ravioli-like Quadretti with mushrooms, tomatoes and truffle sauce. Other options include sauteed grouper with seafood in saffron sauce. Mains \$15-\$26, wine bottles from \$30.

5

Jerry's Famous Deli

Tel 305 532 8030
This striking Art Deco restaurant on Collins Avenue near 15th St sports an impressive, machine-inspired facade. Inside, it's a typical American diner with red leather banquettes, mirrored pillars and a huge menu of stomach-fillers like pizza and burgers. Breakfast choices include cream cheese blintz with tropical fruits and jam. Service is speedy; most dishes \$8-\$14.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Time difference

Early March-early November: GMT-4;
November-March: GMT-5

Exchange rate

£1= US\$2.05

International dialling code

001

Money matters

In restaurants, tipping 15% is customary, unless a service charge is included for that amount. Tips are usually \$1 per drink in bars.

Visas and passports

The US Visa Waiver Programme allows most British Citizen passport holders to holiday in the USA for up to 90 days without a visa. Passports must be machine-readable and you should give your passport details to the airline in advance.

When to go

The hurricane season lasts from June to November; June to October is particularly hot, humid and rainy. Winter is still warm but more pleasant, although hotels are busier and charge higher prices.

Recommended map

Insight Fleximap, scale 1:17,500, £4.99, (ISBN 981-258-128-6)

Tourist information

Miami Beach Visitor Center
1920 Meridian Avenue, Miami Beach
Open Mon-Fri 9am-6pm,
Sat & Sun 10am-4pm

Health and safety

For the latest information, visit the Travel Advice section of www.fco.gov.uk or call 0845 850 2829. Travel insurance should include at least US\$1,000,000 medical cover when visiting the USA.

Recommended guidebooks

The Rough Guide to Miami & South Florida, Aug 2005 edition, £9.99 (ISBN 1-84353-513-0)
Time Out Miami & the Florida Keys, 4th edition, £12.99 (ISBN 978-1-904978-59-6)

Downtown Miami Welcome Center
Gusman Center for the Performing Arts
174 East Flagler Street, Miami

Useful websites

www.gmcbv.com
www.visitflorida.com