

Hotels & Hostels

Want more Sleeping recommendations than we could ever pack into this little ol' book? Craving more detail – including extended reviews and photographs? Want to read reviews by other travelers and be able to post your own? Just make your way over to lonelyplanet.com/hotels and check out our thorough list of independent reviews, then reserve your room simply and securely.

SLEEPING

top picks

- **Cardozo Hotel** (p172)
- **Pelican Hotel** (p172)
- **Circa 39** (p179)
- **Sagamore** (p177)
- **Setai** (p176)
- **Biltmore Hotel** (p181)
- **Shore Club** (p176)
- **Standard** (p182)
- **Hotel St Augustine** (p174)
- **Hotel Shelley** (p174)

SLEEPING

It's in this category, more than any other, where all the hype surrounding South Beach is justified. Lots of places are packed with high quality resorts and boutique sleeping spots. But what sets South Beach apart – what defines it as a travel destination – is the deco district, and the deco district's backbone is hotels. A five-minute jaunt here takes you past many sleeping spots, all with lovingly crafted distinct personalities. And the Beach's glam only grows with every new accommodation option lauded by the travel glossies, which brings the designers, which brings the fashionistas, which brings the models, which brings the tourists, which brings the chefs and...well, you get the idea.

In other words, the architectural elements that make this neighborhood special also house your minibar. And pool. And hot tub. And those aluminum chairs you can't call chairs because you're supposed to refer to them by the name of whoever made them, ie 'Mmm, this Andre De Flipinlap is so comfy.' And to be fair, while lots of folks here like to name-drop designers, the fact is guys such as Ian Schrager (Shore Club, p176; Delano, p176) and André Balazs (Raleigh, p177; Standard, p182) really can put together a lovely living space, especially compared to the competition. Elsewhere in Miami, accommodation is more pedestrian – a few private islands, B & Bs and lots of big box corporate resorts (although the latter have upped the bar thanks to the SoBe competition).

You can have attitude if you want it. 'Sexy' and 'intimidating' can go hand in hand, and nothing hits this feeling home (like you're asking out the most popular kid in school) than the towering beach cabanas and sexy backyard lounges of SoBe's megahotels. But there's too much competition around for owners to totally act the snob, and you'll find happy hours in local lounges more about breaking the ice and having fun than seeing and being seen. Mostly.

LONGER-TERM RENTALS

You could consider an apartment rental for longer stays, thriftiness and use of a kitchen. [Interhome](http://www.interhome.com) (☎ 305-940-2299; www.interhome.com), [Vacation Home Rentals Worldwide](http://www.vacationhome.com) (☎ 800-633-3284) or [Craig's List](http://miami.craigslist.org) (<http://miami.craigslist.org>) are a few places to start.

SEASONAL COSTS

Seasons in South Florida refer to tourist density, not the weather. During high season (December to March), expect to pay as much as triple the rate compared to the rest of the year (note that some hotels include

shoulder seasons that last from April to June when rates may run 1½ times higher). During major events – Winter Music Conference, Spring Break or South Beach Food & Wine Festival (all in February and March by the way), expect rates to soar through the roof. Also note that many Miami hotels have two- or three-night minimum stays in high season.

ROOM RATES

Generally, a budget hotel will cost roughly \$100 a night during low season, while the most expensive places start at \$300 (or much more) and rise steeply from there; dorm hostel

BOOK ONLINE!

When you're booking a room in Miami, it can pay – in savings of up to 50% – to not directly reserve with the hotel. That's because published rates, known in the biz as 'rack rates,' are always highest when quoted by the hotel directly. Instead, do what savvy travelers do: use the internet to help track down the lowest possible rates. Good sites include [Orbitz](http://www.orbitz.com) (www.orbitz.com), [Go Travel](http://www.gotravel.com) (www.gotravel.com), and [Expedia](http://www.expedia.com) (www.expedia.com), which also offer discounts on air travel and car rentals, and sometimes package all three. Other sites, such as [Priceline](http://www.priceline.com) (www.priceline.com) and [Hotwire](http://www.hotwire.com) (www.hotwire.com), let you enter a bid for the type of hotel you're interested in, and then either accept or reject it. That comes with risks, as you don't know where you'll end up until your bid is already locked in and you've been automatically charged. Also, check the individual hotel's website: most offer deals if you book through the internet rather than on the phone. We've seen rack-rates of \$245 sell for as low as \$99 online.