

# PLAN YOUR TRIP

## YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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### January

The beginning of the new year also happens to be the height of the tourist season in these parts. Expect fair weather, crowds, higher prices than usual and a slew of special events.

**Orange Bowl**  
Home of football fans devoted on Miami for the Super Bowl of college football, the infamous Orange Bowl (www.orangebowl.org). The center city gets a special demographic shot, while those that

Miami's future is the city's iconic, classic-with-shower, cafe, and vendors and antiques. Held January.

**Miami Jewish Film Festival**  
This international film festival is a city that val (www.miamijewishfilmfestival.com). Festival runs gets a good of these is amount of alternative if you really want to see the best of Miami, and is a chance to choose the best of the biggest Ave in the US.

**Marveling at Coral Gables' Mansions**  
Coral Gables (972) is called The City Beautiful with good reason.



# UNDERSTAND MIAMI & THE KEYS

## GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

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**10,000 BC**  
After crossing the Bering Strait from Siberia some 50,000 years earlier, humans arrive in Florida, hunting mastodons and saber-toothed tigers, at the end of the last Ice Age.

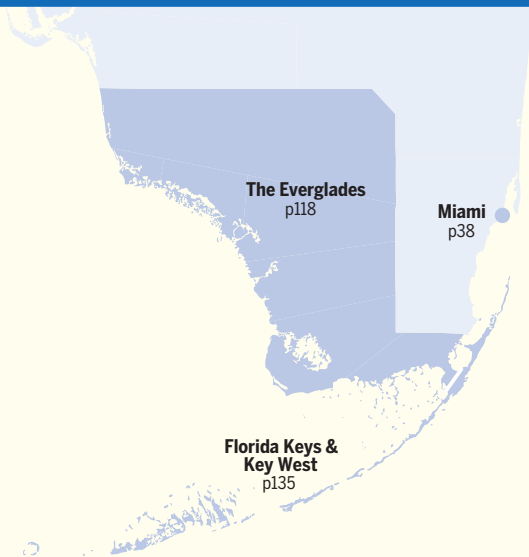
**500 BC**  
Pottery from this period is attributed to the Glades Culture, which stretches from the Keys to present-day Martin County, north of Miami. The Glades Culture does not survive European contact.

### if Miami were 100 people

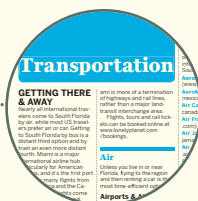
15 would be White (non-Hispanic)  
10 would be Black  
2 would be Asian

1 would be Native American  
10 would be Hispanic





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➤ **Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first**

➤ **Look out for these icons:**



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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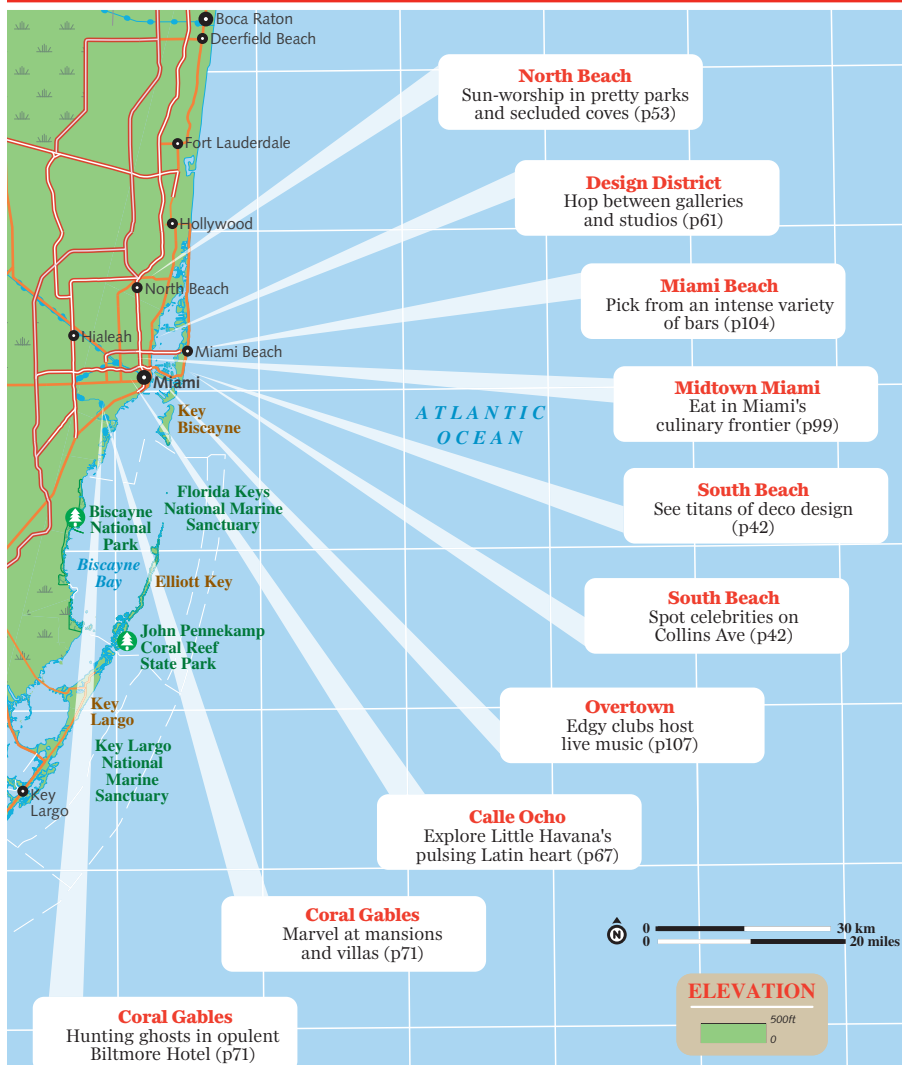
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# › Miami & the Keys



## Top Experiences ›



## Dry Tortugas National Park & Key West National Wildlife Refuge

## Dry Tortugas National Park

**Key West  
National Wildlife  
Refuge**

24°30'N



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Adam Karlin

**Coordinating Author** Adam grew up, as so many Americans do, with grandparents in Florida, and fondly remembers many a December snowbirding in West Palm Beach. Later in life he worked as a reporter for the *Key West Citizen*. What followed was a period of writing on trailer-park evictions, mosquito-eating guppies, melodramatic local government hearings (is there any other kind?) and Cuban boat people, plus short stints working as a radio DJ and

bouncer in the Keys. Eventually he was hired by Lonely Planet to cover South Florida in all her myriad weirdness. Since then he's written or contributed to over two dozen guidebooks for the company, almost always in tropical places: the Southern USA, Caribbean, Africa and Southeast Asia. It's a living. Follow Adam at [www.walkonfine.com](http://www.walkonfine.com).

Read more about Adam at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/adamkarlin](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/adamkarlin)

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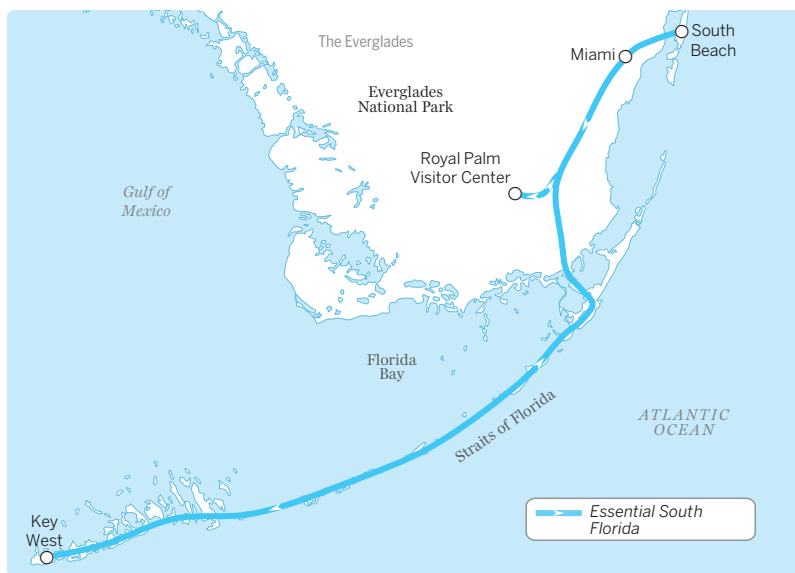
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# itineraries

*Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to [lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://lonelyplanet.com/thorntree) to chat with other travelers*



10 Days

## Essential South Florida

We'd recommend starting your trip in **South Beach**, Miami, which encapsulates the best and worst of what South Florida has to offer. Take hotels like the Delano, Tides and the Shore Club, places that capture both the sheer aesthetic innovation and off-putting exclusivity of the South Beach experience. Enjoy the people watching on Lincoln Rd and a tour of the Art Deco Historic District.

Using South Beach as a base, spend the next few days exploring some of Miami's neighborhoods, including the Latin flavor of **Little Havana**, the Euro-style cafes and mansions of **Coral Gables** and the art galleries, excellent food and bumping nightlife around **Wynwood** and the **Design District**.

Four or five days is a good amount of time to get a feel for Miami. Spend the remainder of your time embarking on either our Overseas Highway Road Trip or the Everglades National Park trips following, making sure to spend at least a day and a night in **Key West** and visit the **Royal Palm Visitor Center** in the Everglades.



## Five Days

### Miami: Downtown to South Miami

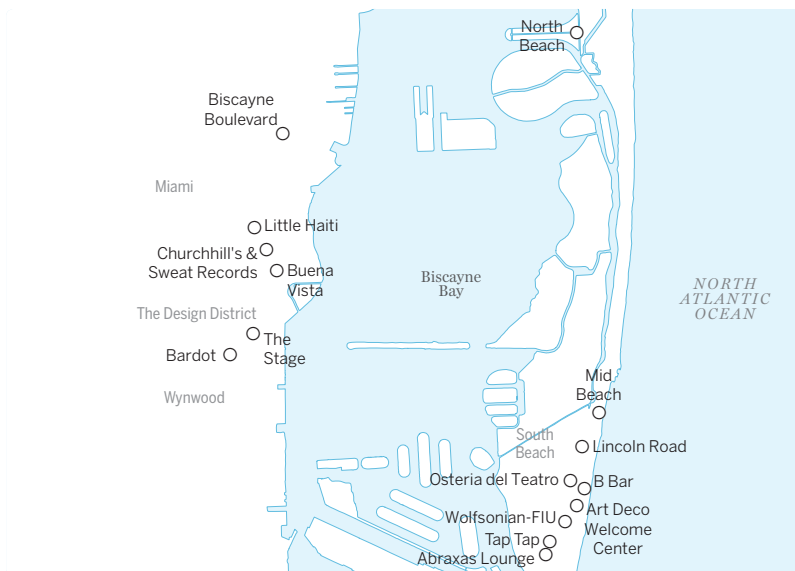
On this trip you'll get to experience some of the best of Miami's ethnic enclaves, hobnob in some of its wealthiest neighborhoods and witness firsthand the opulent magic that gives this city the nickname 'The Magic City'.

Start in Downtown, a glittering fist of steel and glass that shadows rough alleyways and cheap international flea markets. Take a long ride on the free Metromover, hopping on and off to see the excellent **HistoryMiami** museum and the gorgeous **Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts**. Have a stroll along the **Miami River**, taking in the sunset and romantic seediness (try not to walk too far from the Metromover station, for safety's sake). At night, have a beer at **Tobacco Road** before doing as the locals do with a Colombian hot dog at **La Moon**.

The next day, head to Coral Gables, making sure not to miss the **Biltmore Hotel**, the **Venetian Pool** (possibly the loveliest public pool in the USA) and a shopping stroll down Miracle Mile. If that isn't opulent enough, see what happens when Mediterranean revival, Baroque stylings and money get mashed together at the **Vizcaya Museum & Gardens**. Afterwards, top off a visit to these elegant manse with dinner at one of the best restaurants in Miami in – no kidding – a gas station at **El Carajo**.

On the third day, head to Little Havana and have a stroll down **Calle Ocho**, making sure to watch the dominoes at Máximo Gómez Park. Have a Cuban lunch, browse the local cigar shops, then pop over to Coconut Grove, where the hippies of yesterday have been utterly replaced with the yuppies of today. Well, there's still some good karmic vibe under the banyan trees in the form of stores like the **Metta Boutique**.

Spend your last day exploring Key Biscayne, enjoying beaches, sunbathing and bliss in areas like **Crandon Park**. Before you leave, guzzle a beer and pick at some smoked fish and fascinating stories on the couches of **Jimbo's** on Virginia Key, a sort of bar-squatter camp filled with old pirates and fishermen, where the manatees sometimes swim right up to the adjacent docks.



## Five Days

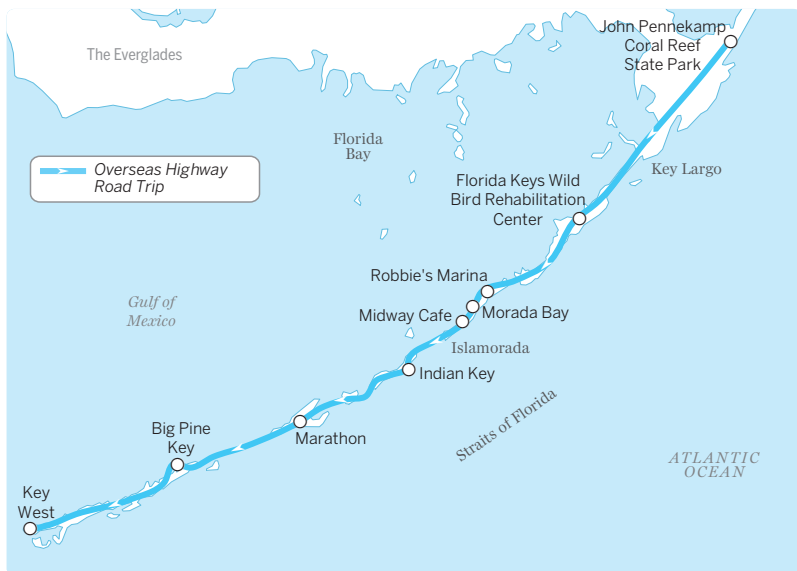
### Miami: Miami Beach & North Miami

Start your trip in South Beach and use this region and its excellent hotels as your base. Make sure you visit the **Wolfsonian-FIU** design museum to get background on the surrounding art deco. Head for **Lincoln Road** to people-watch and browse the trendy shops; afterwards, you'd be remiss to not take a tour with the lovely folks at the **Art Deco Welcome Center**. For a nice dinner try **Osteria del Teatro** (classy Italian) or **Tap Tap** (psychedelic Haitian). When you're ready to hit the town (and the rails), we suggest early cocktails at **B Bar** and some beers at the **Abraxas Lounge**.

The next day, check out **Little Haiti**. This is one of the most colorful, recognizably 'foreign' neighborhoods in Miami, and it can be edgy at night, but by day you're fine to explore. A half mile south of here you'll find **Sweat Records** and **Churchill's**; the former is one of Miami's best music shops, while the latter is a down and dirty British punk pub.

You can easily make a day out of visiting Little Haiti, so the next morning go to the trendy **Design District** and the art galleries and studio spaces of **Wynwood**. Taken together, these neighborhoods constitute Midtown Miami, the most self-consciously artsy-creative section of the city. The Design District is a compact area that's easy to walk around and good for shopping (assuming you're loaded; these ain't starving artists, apparently). If you're hungry, head to one of the new restaurants flowering just north of here in shady **Buena Vista** or along **Biscayne Boulevard**. At night, clubs like **Bardot** and venues like **The Stage** are great spots to wet your whistle, watch DJs and live music and get your dance on.

After a few days of exploring Midtown and South Beach, head north along Collins Ave to **Mid-Beach** and **North Beach**. To get here you'll pass through the Condo Canyons – rows and rows of glittering residential skyscrapers, all testament to the power of real estate in Miami. In Mid-Beach, near the north end of South Beach, you'll find an excellent boardwalk if you feel like strolling near the sand.



## Three Days Overseas Highway Road Trip

The Overseas Highway (Hwy 1) runs from the tip of the Florida mainland all the way to the famed Mile Marker 0: Key West, the end of the road and the end of America. As you tick the mile markers down, you'll be treated to some of Florida's oddest attractions and the ever-inspiring view of Florida Bay on one side, the Gulf of Mexico on the other.

Well, OK, you'll get to that view, but first you have to go through the Upper Keys, larger islands that block the view of the water via big fields of scrub pine and mangroves. On northerly Key Largo, check out the diving options at **John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park**, or visit the injured birds at the **Florida Keys Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center**. After a day's activities among fish or birds, tear into some lunch at the lovely Key Largo Conch House.

It'd be good to sleep in Islamorada on your first day in the Keys – if you can afford it, splurge at excellent **Morada Bay**. Wake up the next morning and feed the enormous tarpon at **Robbie's Marina**, and if you're feeling fit, hire a kayak and paddle out to **Indian Key**. When you're done you'll likely be feeling a little sapped, so make sure you caffeinate yourself at the excellent **Midway Cafe**.

By midday you'll easily have arrived at **Marathon**, geographic center of the Keys. If you're curious about the unique ecological background of the Keys and fancy a walk in the woods, head to the Crane Point Museum; if sea turtles happen to be your thing, a visit to the good doctors at the sanctuary Turtle Hospital may be in order. Eat dinner over the water at Keys Fisheries, then grab a beer at Hurricane.

Wake up and cross the Seven-Mile Bridge onto **Big Pine Key**, where tiny Key deer prance alongside the road.

Another hour's drive south and you're in **Key West**. Truly, this island deserves its own itinerary – just make sure you don't miss the sunset show in Mallory Sq, the six-toed cats at Hemingway's House and a night out at the infamous Green Parrot, the mother of all Keys bars.



## Two Days Along the Tamiami Trail

This route takes you into the heart of what many consider the stereotypical Everglades: airboat tours through waterlogged wetlands, cypress swamps crawling with gators; with a stay in a fishing village.

Go west on Tamiami Trail (US 41) past the **airboat tours** to the entrance to Shark Valley. Take the well-regarded **Shark Valley Tram Tour** or rent a bicycle from the front kiosk and ride back on an asphalt path (the same one used by the tram) that curves into the swamp. You're almost guaranteed a glimpse of alligators and wading birds.

Push on to **Everglades City** (the other sights on the Tamiami Trail can be revisited on the return trip to Miami), a warm hamlet that once made its custom smuggling into the swamps but today is more tied to the tourism trade.

The next day head back toward Miami. Stop at the **Skunk Ape Research Headquarters**, a delightfully weird zoo, gift shop and Bigfoot hunting camp; have lunch at the excellent **Joannie's Blue Crab Café**; check out the country's smallest post office in **Ochopee**; and stop by the **Big Cypress Gallery**, which contains some of the finest photos of the beauty of the Glades.

## Two Days River of Grass

This route into the Everglades takes in vistas of long prairies and cypress domes.

Drive south from Miami to Homestead/Florida City (adjoining towns), and pull over by the **Coral Castle**, a maudlin monument to unrequited love. You'll then be just outside Everglades National Park, where you'll find **Robert Is Here**, a fantastic farmer's market-produce stand-petting zoo. Continue on to the **Everglades Outpost**, an animal hospital for exotic critters.

Push west to see some of the most impressive points within the park, including the **Royal Palm Visitor Center**, where walkways lead over dark waterways prowled by enormous alligators; the **Pinelands Trail**, which takes you through a grove of skeleton-thin swamp pine; and **Pahayokee Overlook**, with views over the Zen quiet of the greater Glades.

Head back to Florida City and spend the night in the fantastic **Everglades Hostel**.

The next morning head back into the Glades and push further south – there's great kayaking and canoeing at **Hell's Bay**, good low country over the windswept mud flats at **Christian Point** and boating in Florida Bay at the **Flamingo Visitor Center**.



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