

Understand Miami & the Keys



MIAMI & THE KEYS TODAY 170

Increased regional pride contends with environmental and economic issues in one of the USA's fastest-growing regions.

HISTORY 172

From conquistadors to the Cuban Revolution, we look at the past that shapes South Florida's present.

MORE SOUTH THAN SOUTH 180

Beyond the South is South Florida (Miami, the Everglades and the Keys): immigrant port, marshy frontier, America's offshore island chain and cultural melting pot.

HAUTE OR NOT 189

Local palates demand both five-star ambience and home-cooked meals – although 'home' is a relative term down here...

BIKES, BOATS & BEACHES 197

Flat, yes. Boring, no. Swim, cycle, boat, dive and discover South Florida's outdoor extravaganza.

SWAMP THING 204

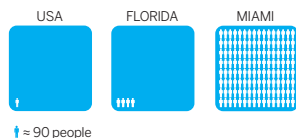
Prehistoric reptiles prowl beautiful wetlands, mangrove islets shimmer in the sunset, and we explore the local environment in this chapter.

ART-DECO MIAMI 213

Art-deco architecture gives Miami a uniquely beautiful facade; we peer underneath the pastel exterior in this chapter.



population per sq miles



Miami & the Keys Today

Pride in Place

South Florida has always been a region apart from the rest of the USA. While small communities here can trace their roots to colonial America (and in the case of Everglades Native Americans, further back), by and large this is an old land with a young people drawn from all over Latin America, the Caribbean and the rest of the USA.

As a result, in the past many locals pined for feeling, well, local. South Beach, the epicenter of local tourism, had the cachet of a consumer playground, where the hot spots were populated not by locals, but jet-setters who flew in, partied and flew out.

Yet this perception, both external and internal, is changing. Jordan Melnick, who writes the excellent *Beached Miami* (www.beachedmiami.com) arts blog, told us over coffee, 'People who grew up in Miami used to think there was nothing in Miami, and the cool places to go were all filled with people from out of town. Now we're discovering there's a lot more Miami for people from Miami.'

Melnick was speaking of the growth of Wynwood, Overtown's nightlife, North Biscayne Boulevard's renaissance, and creative infrastructure like the New World Center, and we'd add: yes, these places are fantastic for locals, but they're open to visitors too. Miami has always tied growth to 'lifestyle': to bars, restaurants and shopping, rather than industry and manufacturing. That lifestyle is now appealing to locals by drawing on local creative talent, be it in the kitchen, club, concert hall or studio space. At the same time, because locals here are often from everywhere, there's a cosmopolitanism that couples with this homegrown spirit forming an intensely local, fiercely proud sense of place.

Miami is a truly bilingual (and sometimes trilingual) city. In order of popularity, the languages spoken here are Spanish, English and Haitian Creole. The last has its roots in French, and many (but not all Haitians) can speak that language. But Spanish is king here, and while most Mi-amians can speak English, even a few phrases of Spanish goes a long ways here.

Wilderness Way

- » When hiking, stay on the trail, pick up your trash.
- » Never pick wildflowers, especially orchids.
- » Never chase or feed wild dolphins or manatees; admire but don't touch.
- » Never feed alligators; they bite.
- » On beaches, never approach nesting sea turtles or hatchling runs. Adhere to nighttime lights-out policies when posted (usually May to October).
- » When snorkeling or diving, never touch coral reefs.

Media

Miami Herald (www.miamiherald.com)

Miami New Times (www.miami.newtimes.com)

Key West Citizen (<http://keysnews.com>)

South Dade News Leader (www.southdadenewsleader.com)