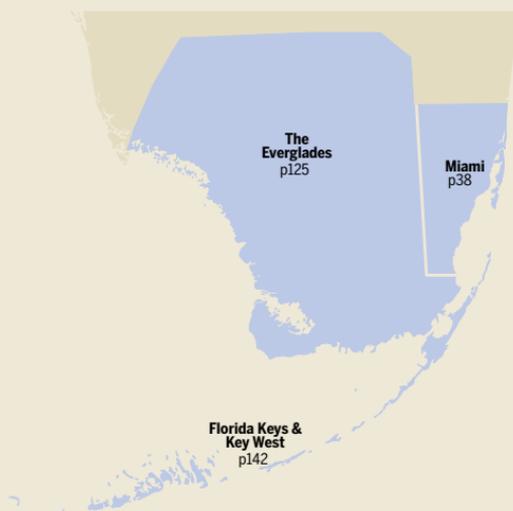




# Miami & the Keys



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Adam Karlin

## PLAN YOUR TRIP

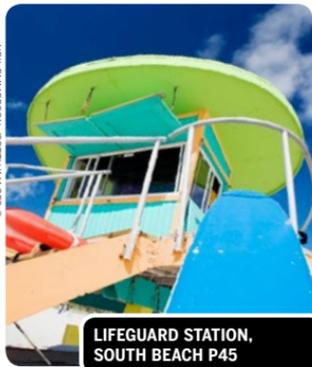
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SHRIMP CEVICHE,  
KEY WEST



LIFEGUARD STATION,  
SOUTH BEACH P45



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GREAT BLUE HERON,  
THE EVERGLADES

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# Itineraries



10  
DAYS

## Essential South Florida

On this trip you'll have a chance to explore Miami's beaches and back alleys, from white sand to classical architecture. It covers a diverse range of neighborhoods that encapsulate the nationalities of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the unique wetland and mangrove ecosystems of the Everglades and the Florida Keys.

Start your trip in **South Beach, Miami** which encapsulates the best of what South Florida has to offer. Exclusive hotels such as the Delano, Tides and the Shore Club capture the sheer aesthetic innovation of the South Beach experience. Enjoy people-watching on Lincoln Rd and a tour of the Art Deco Historic District.

Using South Beach as a base, spend the next four or five 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. Next head to the Everglades, either west along the Tamiami Trail through Hialeah or through Florida City, and visit the **Royal Palm Visitor Center. Homestead** is the jumping-off point from Miami to the Florida Keys. Spend at least a day and a night in **Key West**.

5  
DAYS

## Downtown to South Miami

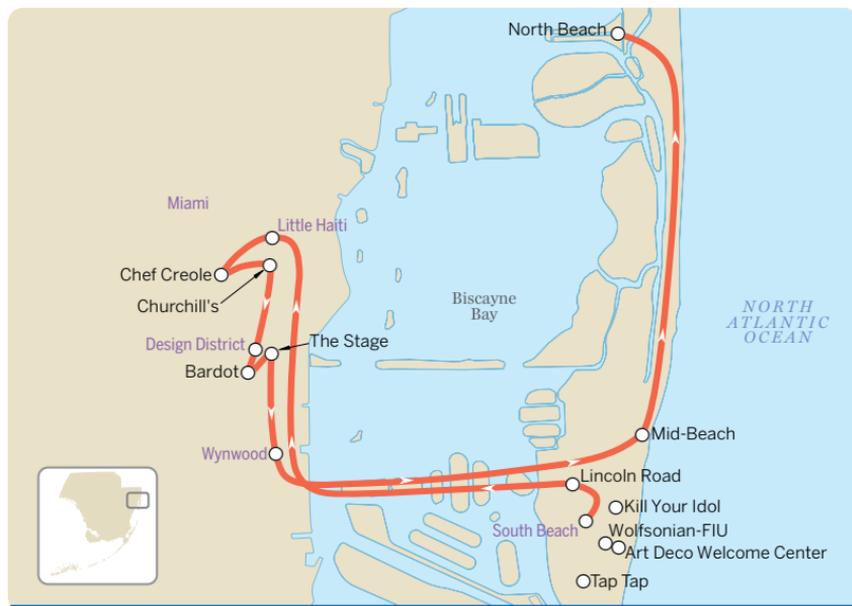
On this trip you'll experience some of the best of Miami's multicultural enclaves, hobnob in some of its wealthiest neighborhoods and witness firsthand the opulent magic that gives this city the nickname 'The Magic City'.

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 downtown sites such as 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 **Blackbird Ordinary** before doing as the locals do and having a Colombian hot dog at **La Moon**.

The next day, head to Coral Gables, making sure not to miss the **Venetian Pool** (possibly the loveliest public pool in the USA), the **Biltmore Hotel** 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**. Afterward, top off a visit to these elegant manses 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 such as the **Metta Boutique**. Grab a bite at **Green Street Cafe**.

Spend your last day exploring Key Biscayne, enjoying beaches, sunbathing and bliss in areas such as **Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park**. Before you leave, head to **Crandon Park** and stroll along the sand, or do as locals do and take a nap. Is there a quiet, serene beach in manic Miami? You just found it.



**5**  
DAYS

## Miami Beach & North Miami

See some of Miami's glitziest glamour honeypots, filled with celebrities and the opulent infrastructure that has been built to accommodate them. Then immerse yourself in some of the city's most fascinating cultural enclaves, as well as hipster gentrification zones.

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 Rd** to people-watch and browse the trendy shops; afterward, you'd be remiss to not take a tour with the lovely folks at the **Art Deco Welcome Center**. For a nice dinner try **Tap Tap** (psychedelic Haitian). When you're ready to hit the town (and the rails), have some beers at **Kill Your Idol**.

The next day, check out **Little Haiti**. This is one of the most colorful, recognizably immigrant neighborhoods in Miami. It can be edgy at night, but by day you're fine to explore. Feast on ox-tail and other Haitian treats at **Chef Creole**. 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 and 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 aren'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, **Bardot** or **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 where you can stroll by the sand.

3  
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.

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 have finished, 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.

2  
DAYS

## Along the Tamiami Trail

This route takes you into the heart of the stereotypical Everglades: airboat tours through waterlogged wetlands and 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 Shark Valley entrance. Take the **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 Tamiami Trail sights can be visited on the return trip to Miami), a warm hamlet once known for smuggling into the swamps but today 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.

2  
DAYS

## River of Grass

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

Drive south from Miami to the adjoining towns of **Homestead** and **Florida City**, and pull over by the Coral Castle, a maudlin monument to unrequited love. You're now just outside Everglades National Park, where you'll find Robert Is Here, a fantastic farmers market and petting zoo. Continue to the Everglades Outpost, an animal hospital for exotic critters.

Push west to see the most impressive points in 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.

Spend the night back in Florida City at 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**.



## 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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, 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 WRITER



### Adam Karlin

**Coordinating Author** Adam's grandmother sheltered him from winter weather in West Palm Beach throughout his childhood, and he worked for a stint at the *Key West Citizen*, covering hyperbolic politicians, Cuban exiles, mosquito-control initiatives and trailer park evictions. It was the sort of journalism gig you supplement with a try at being a local-radio DJ and a few nights' bouncing at Keys bars.

After that adventure, Adam went on to Lonely Planet, where he has written or co-authored well over 40 guidebooks, including three editions of *Florida* and *Miami & the Keys*.

### Published by Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd

ABN 36 005 607 983

7th edition – Jan 2015

ISBN 978 1 74220 730 8

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

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