

Welcome to Miami & the Keys

*Beauty is the name of the game here.
From fashion models to deco hotels,
beach sunrises to wetland ecosystems
and alluring islands, South Florida
is an aesthetic masterpiece.*

The Magic City

South Florida is a land of dreams and Miami is known as the Magic City. Imagination and innovation are big here, manifest in art, architecture and festivals. You'll see it in the extravagance of Lincoln Rd, the ephemeral neon beauty of Ocean Dr, the cloud-kissing skyline of downtown Miami and in the mid-century modern design on N Biscayne Blvd. From the pink castle walls of a Coral Gables mansion to sun-dappled marinas in Coconut Grove; from the Fabergé-egg interior of the Vizcaya Museum to experimental art in Midtown – stay in Miami long enough and you might believe magic is real.

Eat, Drink & Be Merry

In Miami and the Keys, nothing succeeds like excess. People take indulgence to Roman Empire levels, from the music-video-like pools of Miami Beach's extravagant super-hotels, to buckets of beer and fried shrimp in the Florida Keys, to expertly shaken cocktails mixed under a Little Havana moon. Even the skyscrapers are a testament to the region's push for size and extravagance. Fortunately, the best purveyors of food and fun are realizing the good times can't roll at overdrive forever, and are incorporating sustainable business models.

Everglades Encounters

South Florida is full of natural beauty, especially the spectacular wetland ecosystem of the Everglades. A colorful cast of characters inhabits the fringes (and occasionally, the heart) of these swamps, marshes and rolling prairies. Alligator wrestlers and Bigfoot hunters share a beer at crab shacks, while panthers prowl the backyard, and environmentalists document the magic of this unique wilderness. The Everglades shows nature at its most alluring; witness the ripple of bubbles as a gator submerges into the blackwater bayou, and the fish-dive of waterfowl hunting the sparkling sloughs.

The Keys to Quirk

America's eccentricities (and quite a few eccentrics) coalesce in the southeast corner that is South Florida. And the truly unconventional are found in the sun-dappled isles of the Florida Keys. This lovely island chain is connected by the Overseas Highway – one of the nation's great road-trip byways. Here you'll find drag queens working as insect exterminators, 'No Name' islands inhabited by miniature deer, and colorful Key West: a tolerant pot of gold at the end of a rainbow flag. And all ensconced within the natural beauty of shimmering bays, serene tidal flats and emerald islands.



Why I Love Miami & the Keys

By Adam Karlin, Author

South Florida is an American original. The emphasis on beauty, presentation, style and color is intoxicating and comes in a million shades, from graffitied Wynwood Walls to extravagant high-end hotels. There's often a sense of whimsy about and, more so, a palpable feel of cultures colliding; no other place merges Anglo America, Latin America and the Caribbean so completely. Throw in some sunny islands to chill out on and a heart-wrenchingly beautiful wetland wilderness and I'm sold.

For more about our author, see page 248