

# Understand Miami & the Keys

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South Florida is facing climate change head-on, while also grappling with ongoing threats to its biologically rich ecosystems.

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The grand design once celebrating the future is now a gorgeous relic of the past, with tropical themes that pay homage to Florida's lush setting.

# Miami & the Keys Today

**South Florida is thriving: a diverse and open-minded population, low unemployment and a strong economy – which, after a string of high-performing years, will reach \$1 trillion by 2018. Yet climate change poses significant threats to Miami Beach and the Keys, and the ever-expanding population places increasing stress on critically threatened ecosystems like the Everglades. Rather than bury their heads in the sand, Floridians are facing these issues head-on and working to find solutions to the biggest challenges of today.**

## Best on Film

**Moonlight** (2016) Poignant, Oscar-winning coming-of-age tale set in a housing project in Miami.

**Wind Across the Everglades** (1958) Offbeat story of warden versus poacher, against a Glades backdrop.

**Key Largo** (1948) Bogart, Bacall and neon-soaked noir.

**Adaptation** (2002) Surreal adaption of *The Orchid Thief*.

**The Birdcage** (1996) Robin Williams and Nathan Lane as gay lovers.

**Scarface** (1983) Al Pacino turns the American Dream into a nightmare.

## Best in Print

**Birds of Paradise** (Diana Abu-Jaber; 2011) Beautifully captures Miami's complexity in a story about a broken couple and the estranged children.

**Swamplandia!** (Karen Russell; 2011) Tragicomic saga of a family of Everglades alligator wrestlers.

**Miami** (Joan Didion; 1987) Portrait of life among Cuban exiles in the 1980s.

**The Everglades: River of Grass** (Marjory Stoneman Douglas; 1947) Rich tribute to the Glades.

**Shadow Country** (Peter Matthiessen; 2008) The American Western reframed in the Florida swamps.

## Confronting Climate Change

While the US government does its best to deny climate change, South Florida is already feeling the effects of a hotter planet. What scientists warned about years ago is becoming increasingly evident in the bottom half of Florida: namely that with higher temperatures, the sea levels would rise, and powerful storms would become more frequent. Coastlines would be particularly imperiled.

While bureaucrats continue to obfuscate the facts in Washington, down in South Florida, the citizens have already seen enough evidence – commonplace floods on streets that were always dry in the past, and cars and lawns ruined by seawater as sea-level rise has tripled in the last decade. Under mounting pressure from residents, Miami Beach has sprung into action, unveiling a \$400 million plan that includes funding to elevate streets, build higher seawalls and add dozens of new pumps to deal with the inundations. The plan is especially ambitious considering Florida's governor Rick Scott refuses to even acknowledge climate change.

Luckily Miami Beach Mayor Philip Levine sees things differently, committing his city to a robust plan of fortifying itself against rising seas over the long term. Advocates of the plan tout not only the importance of investing in a more resilient city of the future, but its potential as a job-creating engine – putting people to work in an overhaul of aging infrastructure. The big question, though, is whether or not South Florida will be able to keep up with the threats that lie ahead.

## Regrowing the Reef

As the oceans warm, the world's coral reefs remain gravely threatened. Even small fluctuations in temperatures can lead to huge swaths of coral bleaching and die-offs. In back-to-back years (2015 and 2016) the Florida Keys