

Condé Nast Traveler

THE WORLD MADE LOCAL

MAY/JUNE 2022

THE 2022 hot list

THE BEST NEW HOTELS
IN THE WORLD

PLUS

THE LATEST
CRUISES,
RESTAURANTS,
AND MORE

Miami
Sicily
Dakar



The retro-glam
pool and terrace at
The Goodtime Hotel
in South Beach

Opposite page:
A sunset
cocktail in one
of the hotel's
pool cabanas

TURN UP THE HEAT

Sunny days, wild nights, and proximity to the Caribbean have long made Miami one of the world's preeminent party towns. Now, new money and a laissez-faire attitude have made it one of the most dynamic destinations in America. Here, five views of the Magic City

Photographs by Oliver Pilcher





A MIAMI WELCOME

I've always thought myself extremely lucky to have been born and raised in Miami, and also lucky to have left: It is in the leaving that I learned to see my hometown's influences on me and on the ways I experience the rest of the world. For one thing, Miami made me a writer, a fan of em dashes—that most Miami of punctuation marks in its attempt to cram a sentence inside another sentence, like the strip of guava peeping out from the city's famed pastelitos—and a lover of percussive prose. Growing up in Miami also taught me to have very strong opinions about the quality of tropical fruits, about

beaches and the acceptable temperature of ocean water (slightly below warm bath, please), and the number of accessories deemed appropriate to wear pretty much anywhere (answer: There is no limit). Thanks to Miami, I've never met a heel too high, a teal too bright, or a traffic scenario too terrifying.

Miami for me somehow never changes—the neighborhood bakery with its *ventanita*, where my family has ordered *café con leche* on Sunday mornings for decades—and yet every time I've come home since moving away, parts of the city look completely different. There's more newness to see than I have time to explore. I never visit the same Miami twice. That is, unless I go to the actual Miami Twice, a vintage-clothing store on busy Bird Road in South Miami where I bought my prom dress back in the

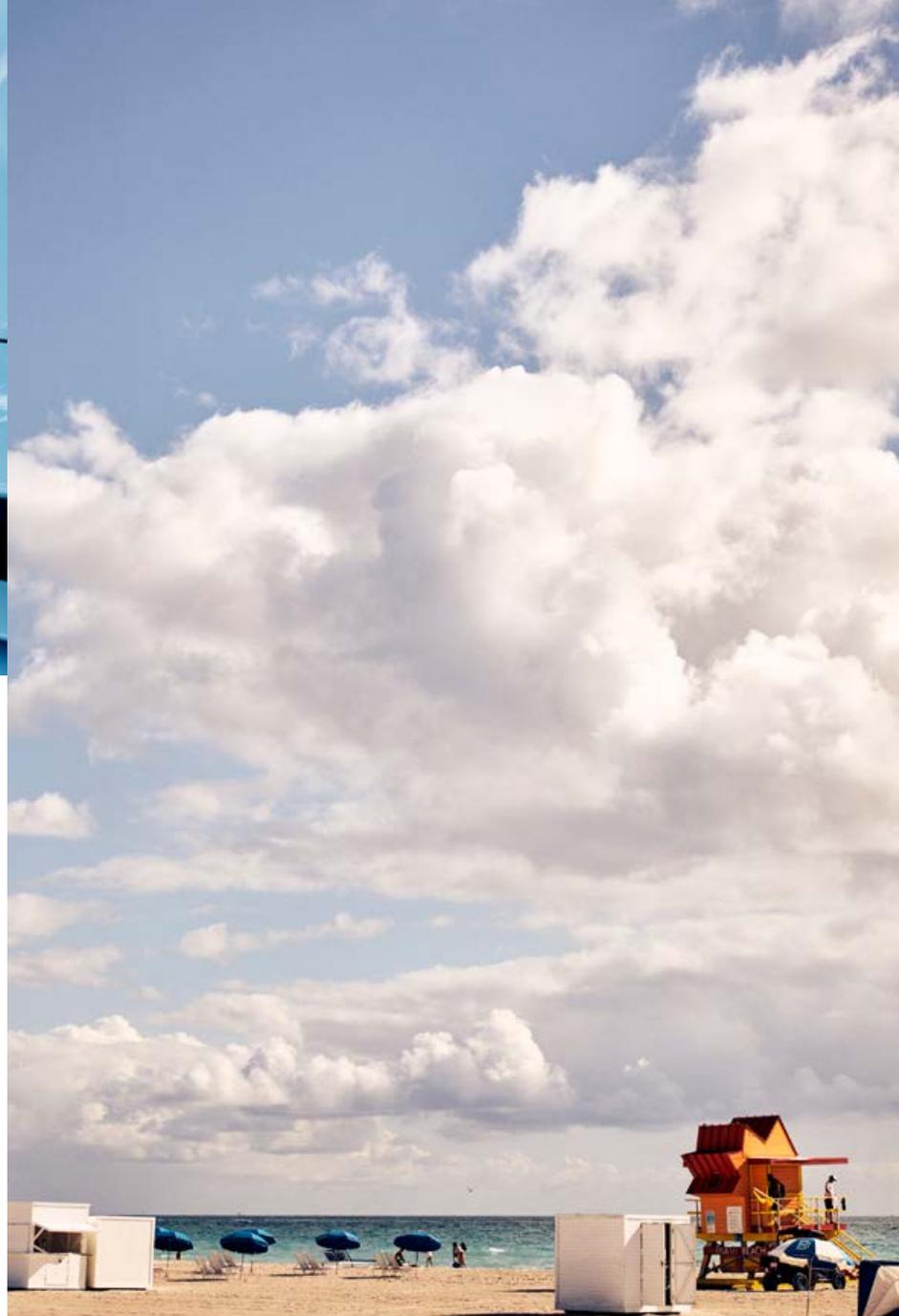


day. That street is also home to Bird Bowl, a gem of a bowling alley, and Playthings, a lingerie-and-sex-toy shop that took over where the laser-tag joint Ultrazone used to be. Both establishments—the latter in its laser-tag incarnation—defined my teen years, as my friends and I gutter-balled and *pew-pew-pew*-ed our weekends away before we were old enough to be admitted into the city's storied nightclubs.

Friends I've brought home have described Miami back to me as loud, but as someone born and raised in the county of Dade, I'll echo the rapper Trick Daddy, a fellow Miami native, in arguing that everywhere else is a notch or five too silent. This is a natural conclusion to draw when you've grown up with the ruckus of passing cars blasting stereos so loud the music rattled the windows of your childhood bedroom, the sound easing you into sleep every night: Miami's own bass-bumped lullaby.

I used to attribute my preference for loudness in every aspect of my life to growing up Cuban. Admittedly, my version of Miami is a predominantly Cuban American creation. But my husband, who is also Cuban, grew up in New Hampshire, and his fondness for gray sweatshirts and quiet mornings (as opposed to my morning alarm set to blast a revolving soundtrack of Miami darlings Otto Von Schirach, Afrobeta, and yes, old-school Gloria Estefan) has revealed my preferences for what they are: relics of a Miami upbringing.

I recognize another quality in myself that I trace directly back to growing up in Miami: a propensity for affection. I give out easy hugs, perhaps inspired by the humidity that envelops me in a warm embrace the minute I step off the plane or out of my car, back on home turf—a feeling of the air's potential for closeness that finds me in my dreams even now. Every greeting in my Miami comes with a kiss on the



cheek and a term of endearment. “Mamita” or “mi amor” or “mi cielo,” sweet nicknames bestowed upon me even if the speaker is a stranger. Especially if they are a stranger. Who wouldn't miss a city where you were consistently called someone's love, someone's heaven? Who wouldn't want to return there again and again?

You can stop in for such a greeting at any strip-mall bakery. When you get there, have a mamey shake for me. Savor its creamy, papaya-like sweetness. Pull over to the stand of any random fruit vendor and eat some of the freshest mangoes or guayabas of your life. Introduce yourself to the teenagers throwing reckless balls down the lanes at Bird Bowl. Go kiss them hello for me. Go say goodbye.

JENNINE CAPÓ CRUCET

From far left:
Miami's iconic royal palms;
the extravagant (even by local standards) Sexy Fish restaurant and bar;
a sleek ride in the city's stylish Design District;
early-morning calm on South Beach

BEYOND ART BASEL

When asked about the state of the art-and-design scene in her town, María Elena Ortiz answers without hesitation: “Miami’s hot!” she says. “It’s one of the leaders of the contemporary-art world.” As the curator of the Pérez Art Museum Miami, which explores the work of modern Latin, Caribbean, and Black artists in a striking Herzog & de Meuron building downtown, Ortiz rejects the perception of Miami as a second-tier city looking to emulate Los Angeles or New York. Rather, it is a diverse, dynamic, and authentic cultural hub. The pandemic and the state’s laissez-faire politics have brought in a new crowd, she says, dominated by tech execs with cash to burn—crypto, especially.

The art community’s openness to possibility—combined with affordable real estate—has led to a multitude of new creative ventures. The massive experiential gallery Superblue, which opened last year in the Allapattah district, combines a fun-house vibe with installations by blue-chip artists. It has blue-chip backing; the project is run by the New York mega gallery Pace. The sheer square footage of the space would be impossible to find in New York, but here it’s readily available. After walking through a puff of smoke or gazing in awe at a James Turrell, you can eat at the rainbow-hued café by designer Yinka Ilori, which is itself a permanent installation worthy of a visit.

Across the street is the new location of the splashy, contemporary Rubell Museum, which opened in 2019 in a former industrial space that was transformed by architect Annabelle Selldorf. It’s a prime example of what the art world calls the Miami Model—private museums built by high rollers to exhibit their own collections, often at the same level you’d expect from a major public institution.

Most of the new money flowing into Miami and Florida more generally is coming from tech, much of it migrating from California. Since the pandemic, it’s estimated that the state has gained around \$18 billion in new revenue. This influx is palpable: The Design Miami fair accepted Bitcoin for the first time last December, and the home for the Miami Heat basketball team just renamed itself FTX Arena after a crypto exchange.

Another institution with major backing is about to raise its profile in a major way, this time with very



local roots. Oolite Arts—which, in addition to mounting exhibitions, provides classes, public programs, and studio residencies in Miami Beach—is prepping its new home in the Little River neighborhood. When the space opens in 2024, it will do so with a war chest filled primarily by the \$88 million the institution pocketed by selling its old location. The boost will go toward increasing visitor programming, like one-day workshops in printmaking, painting, and photography; putting on more exhibitions that place an extra focus on local talent (like a recent show with photographer Roscoé B. Thické III); and growing a new permanent collection that will focus solely on Miami artists.

In this tourism-driven town, hotels have long been prime showcases for high-level art and pioneering design. Faena has a rotating number of installations and exhibitions in and around the hotel itself, its outdoor areas, and its special-events space, the Faena Forum. The hotel’s Faena Art Center Project Room acts as a venue for exhibitions like photographer Tony Kelly’s sexy, saturated images of Miami





Beach. The new Goodtime Hotel, owned in part by Pharrell Williams, is a buzzy, crowd-pleasing 266-room property with a happy-go-lucky aesthetic by the always fantastic designer Ken Fulk. It includes a massive pale-pink rooftop pool club with plenty of retro-looking cabanas. And at The Ritz-Carlton in Miami Beach, the Bagatelle restaurant has recently reopened with a new interior by respected French designer Sam Baron and a bar that wraps around a large, leafy olive tree.

While Miami can sometimes overwhelm with its more-is-more spectacle, a recent entrant into the scene runs delightfully in the opposite direction. In the largely residential Coconut Grove, Mr. C hotel—from the group behind the famed Cipriani restaurants and designed by Martin Brudnizki and local architecture firm Arquitectonica—combines old-fashioned nautical themes with a kind of lacquered elegance that’s always relevant for Miami. “Yes, we have that American culture of consumption,” Ortiz says. “But we’re also resourceful. That’s sometimes obscured by the glam, but it makes Miami special. And it’s 81 degrees in January.”

DAN RUBINSTEIN

DINING'S NEW ERA

People go out to eat in Miami these days expecting to be dazzled, but it wasn't always this way. When I moved to Miami about two decades ago, the city was in a food funk. At that time, culinary pilgrims came here for authentic Cuban dishes like a classic *ropa vieja* (a mélange of steak and vegetables that translates to “old clothes” for its resemblance to a pile of rags) at Versailles restaurant, off Calle Ocho. Then, about a decade ago, there was a wave of quality restaurants imported from somewhere else—more exciting, but not terribly Miami-specific in feel or fare. But now the city has an electric, largely homegrown restaurant culture that is keeping stride with its boundary-pushing art and design scenes. Like Miami itself, the new culinary landscape reflects a wide range of influences, isn't afraid to bend the rules, and never takes itself too seriously.

The latest chapter in the city's food story starts first-time restaurateurs who are stirring up daring flavors and concepts inside small-scale restaurants. Take chef Valerie Chang, who, until recently, operat-



Clockwise from top left: A pastel-hued guest room at the Ken Fulk-designed Goodtime Hotel; pool, cheap drinks, and lots of neon at the long-standing dive bar Mac's Club Deuce; a Deco detail on Lincoln Road



ed Itamae as a tiny stall in the MIA Market food hall alongside her father, Fernando, and brother Nando, serving the Japanese-inflected Peruvian cuisine Nikkei. In December 2020, the family opened Itamae as a 40-seat restaurant in the tony Design District. Itamae currently tops many of the nation's best-of lists. With no flashy marketing or over-the-top design, it is quietly cool, letting the boldness shine through in every seafood dish that emerges from its open kitchen, like the uni with Peruvian ají amarillo pepper and bronze fennel.

Along with the Changs, a class of new chefs is spurning the corporate call, starting small while dreaming big, and organically morphing into sophisticated operations. Young guns Luciana Giangrandi and Alex Meyer started out with a taco cart before opening their standout 24-seat restaurant Boia De

in the artsy Buena Vista neighborhood. The duo describe their food as Italian, with air quotes. Their innovations are subtle yet memorable, tweaking traditional Italian recipes to surprise the diner with dishes like lamb ribs served with a classic fra diavolo sauce alongside spicy yogurt and pickled cucumbers. Following a similar trajectory, 30-something-year-old Matteson Koche, the owner of El Bagel, began by delivering hand-rolled bagels by car in Wynwood. After upgrading to a food truck in 2018, he opened a full-on bageleria in spring 2020 to meet demand in MiMo (Miami Modern district), northeast of the Design District. The promise of a chewy sesame with cream cheese and guava marmalade makes the always-long line bearable.

The success of these small-scale restaurateurs has attracted heavy attention from well-known culi-





AFTER SUNDOWN

As the rest of the planet shuttered in the wake of COVID-19, Miami kept on dancing. Soon, others wanted in on this parallel universe void of restrictions. Record-breaking numbers of visitors and prospective residents descended upon this tropical promised land, bringing a newfound appreciation for its Art Deco architecture and design-forward downtown as well as a seemingly insatiable appetite for its more hedonistic offerings. The influx has invigorated and elevated Miami's nightlife scene, which encompasses both glossy newcomers and rejuvenated late-night legends.

In the 1990s, it was all about South Beach. By the late 2000s, Mid-Beach ruled. Amid the decades-long tug-of-war between the two for Miami nightlife supremacy, an unlikely new player has recently arrived on the scene: the Wynwood Arts District, a colorful and edgy neighborhood best known for its Instagram-worthy, eye-catching street art. A standout among the late-night fun is Dante's HiFi, an intimate vinyl listening space. The micro bar, which fits a maximum of 50, has a private-party atmosphere, where people sip mezcal cocktails and listen to DJ Rich Medina pull from his 8,500-strong record collection. Odds of securing a table are much higher at the 10,000-square-foot hotel-inspired Freehold Miami. The Brooklyn export has a 24-hour entertainment concept that spreads the revelry over three bumping bars, a massive courtyard, a café, and a performance space. If it's past midnight on a Saturday, La Otra, a high-energy discoteca where bottle service and Latin pop go hand in hand, is sure to be packed.

Restaurant-club hybrids that promise fine dining early in the evening and all-out throwdowns until the wee hours are the city's newest after-dark trend. While the metamorphosis from restaurant to dance hall isn't a novel concept, it's one that has found fresh footing, especially among Miamians who claim traditional clubbing is passé (it's not) or feel they've aged out. The apex of these split-personality venues—and the hottest table in the 305—is downtown's Sexy Fish. When the original opened in London in 2015, it single-handedly made dressing up for dinner cool again. Marine-themed and seafood-centric, the Miami outpost dazzles by design, with over-the-top aquatic-imbued glass mosaics and sculptures by Damien Hirst and Frank Gehry. As the hours pass and

nary names. Today it's not uncommon to see chef Akino West of Rosie's, a modest weekend pop-up serving Southern cuisine in the gritty Allapattah neighborhood, team up for a brunch collaboration with glitzy Italian eatery Osteria Morini Miami Beach, part of the Altamarea Group, which includes Michelin-starred restaurants like New York City's Marea. And while other big-name imports continue to set up shop in Miami—Carbone, Red Rooster, and Cote Korean Steakhouse have all opened outposts within the last two years—they've done so this time with an eye on Miami design, flavor, and feel. Classic Cuban dishes are still easy to find and worth seeking out, but they're no longer the only truly local game in town. There's a bright, diverse culinary landscape to choose from. Now is a delicious time to be in Miami. NILA DO SIMON

Clockwise from top left: Poolside solitaire at The Goodtime Hotel; an interactive art exhibit by teamLab at Superblue gallery; tabletop barbecuing at Cote Korean Steakhouse; Dante's HiFi, inspired by Tokyo's listening bars, has strong cocktails and an even stronger vinyl collection

the theatrical cocktails kick in, DJs turn up the volume, mermaid dancers emerge, costumed performers shake it, and the crowd joins in. The net effect is one big, fabulous party under the sea. Over in South Beach, St.-Tropez mainstay Bagatelle brings the joie de vivre to town with lavish dinners of French-inflected cuisine punctuated by wild moments filled with popping Champagne corks, sparklers, and tabletop dancing. More subdued is the scene at MILA, a rooftop MediterrAsian restaurant that attracts Miami's most fashionable for evenings of epic people-watching and house music.

Miami may be America's trendiest city when it comes to nightlife, but some Magic City institutions never go out of style. One of the city's oldest bars, Mac's Club Deuce, a dive-y, neon-trimmed joint in the heart of South Beach, is irresistibly lo-fi and pulls in mostly locals seeking to escape tourists. Twist, celebrating 30 years in 2023, is the city's longest-running gay bar. To visit is to travel back in time to the city's 1990s LGBTQ+ heyday. With no cover (and almost no dress code), the house is always packed with shirtless muscle boys, towering drag queens, and curious admirers. Mega nightclubs LIV and E11EVEN continue to duke it out for bragging rights as the city's premier hot spot. LIV, a 22,000-square-foot state-of-the-art dance club at the Fontainebleau in Mid-Beach, welcomes global talent like Cardi B and Drake regularly. E11EVEN is an "ultra club" (read: Lap dances and burlesque-style performances aren't uncommon) with bottle-service options ranging from \$2,000 to \$15,000. It currently reigns as the highest-grossing club per square foot on the planet. As the locals tell it, you haven't lived large, Miami style, until you've emerged from one of them as the sun is rising on another perfect South Florida morning. PAUL RUBIO



Clockwise from top left:
Getting things going at Dante's HiFi, in the Wynwood neighborhood; a street scene in the Design District; a suspended art installation by Studio Drift at Superblue



SHOP LIKE YOU LIVE HERE

You could be forgiven for thinking that Miami's retail options can be distilled to three things: same-y low-rent strips; slick designer malls like the ones in Aventura and Bal Harbour; and South Beach souvenir stores that hawk bikinis displayed on mannequins with ridiculously small waists and improbably large breasts. The truth is, there's a multitude of authentic only-in-Miami shopping experiences around town; you just need a black-belt local like me to clue you in.

Take, for example, Lincoln Road. The quirky stores that once lined South Beach's mile-long pedestrianized street are long gone, replaced by

national and international brands that can afford the soaring cost per square foot. But if you swing by on a Sunday, you'll happen upon the Lincoln Road Antiques and Collectibles Market, which has been setting up on the street's western end for more than 30 years. Up to thrice a month between October and May, around 100 vendors create a haven for shoppers in search of estate jewelry, vintage clothing, midcentury furniture, and eclectic bric-a-brac. On my last visit, I scored an African mask, Pepto Bismol—pink lace-up go-go boots, and a blue glass vase the exact color of the surf just blocks away.

With weather like ours and a thriving workout culture, Miamians are fully invested in beachwear that shows off the taut bodies we work on year-round. Appropriately skimpy swimsuits are a cinch to find in hotel boutiques. But for a cover-up in sync with the city's colorful vibe, head to Pitusa in Wynwood, where a rainbow of flowy maxidresses and tunics, some playfully punctuated with pom-poms and braided trim, will take you from beach to bar.

December's Art Basel Miami Beach has become a fixture on our cultural scene, providing plenty of art and artsy "shopopportunities" in permanent and pop-up galleries across the city. But discerning and design-minded buyers can always find elevated "bring backs" at our museum gift shops. I'm a big fan of the one at downtown's Pérez Art Museum Miami (we call it "the PAMM"), where city-themed coloring books work for kids little and large, and Tropicalism-inspired pins by local artist Kenny Jones (a pink-and-green watermelon slice; a bright-yellow banana) make fabulous gifts for someone back home.

But what really makes Miami *Miami* is its people, many of whom, like me, hail from the Caribbean. You can taste—and take with you—the city's island flavors with a to-go order of Jamaican patties from Sonia's Patties, in the west-side suburb of Kendall, or half a dozen guava-filled pastelitos from Enriqueta's Sandwich Shop, in Edgewater. But for more tangible island-inspired items, I recommend something—anything, really!—from La Tiendecita by Martha of Miami. A celebration of all things Cubano, owner Martha Valdes's merch includes her signature Cuban Bred clothing and caps. And if you're looking for something more classic, Little Havana's Ramón Puig sells precisely pin-tucked guayabera shirts tailored for men and women, guaranteed to add un poquito Miami style to your ensemble. SARAH GREAVES-GABBADON