

1

The Best **Full-Day Tours**



The Best in One Day



Previous page: Kenneth Triester's Sculpture of Love & Anguish at the Holocaust Memorial.

With one day to spend in Miami, focus on the city's media darling—South Beach, aka the American Riviera.

South Beach isn't just a stretch of sand, but rather a collection of Kodak moments, from museums and models to cafes and celebrities. Here you'll find historic Art Deco buildings, whose pristine preservation rivals that of many of South Beach's saline, silicone, and Botox-saturated denizens. **START: Art Deco Welcome Center.**



The Colony Hotel's distinct Art Deco signage.

1 ★★★ Gawk at the original supermodel—the Art Deco District. Take a self-guided walking and audio tour around Ocean Drive's Art Deco District, where sleek and chic streamlined, neon-lit, pastel-hued buildings are ready for their close-ups.

90 min. *Set your own pace and walk on, but it's best to do so early morning or late afternoon to avoid crowds and heat.* **305/672-2014.** www.mdpl.org. Tickets \$15 adults, \$10 seniors & children.

2 Versace Mansion. Morbid curiosity has led hordes of people—tourists and locals—here, once the only private home (now a country club and resort for those in the upper brackets) on Ocean Drive. If you can get past the fact that the late designer, Gianni Versace, was murdered on the steps of this

palatial estate, you will observe the intricate Italian architecture that makes this house stand out from its streamlined deco neighbors. Built in the 1930s as a replica of Christopher Columbus's son's palace in Santo Domingo, the house was originally called Casa Casuarina (House of the Pine), but was rechristened the Amsterdam Palace in 1935 when George Amsterdam purchased it. While there were rumors that the mansion was to be turned into a Versace museum, it was, instead, purchased by a private citizen from Texas. They offer tours from time to time, so call ahead and check. There's also a restaurant inside that's open to the public if you're hungry—and in the market for a pricey snack. **5 min.–2 hr.** *(if you want to eat).* **1114 Ocean Dr.**



The ornate pool at the Versace Mansion.

☎ 305/672-6604. www.casa-casuarina.com. Tours offered seasonally; \$65 per person, includes 1 mimosa.

Quench your thirst at **3 News Cafe**, the catalyst to South Beach's late-'80s revival and the quintessence of the beach's cafe society. 800 Ocean Dr. ☎ 305/538-6397. \$.

4 Lummus Park. This is South Beach. Past the dunes and the beach-volleyball courts is this stellar stretch of sand, sunbathers, and photogenic, colorful lifeguard stands. If you're not in the mood to lie under an umbrella and laze away,

Colorful lifeguard stands line Lummus Park.



take a break on the bike path to take in the scenery. ⌚ 5 min.–1 hr. Ocean Dr. between 5th & 14th sts.

5 ★★★ Wolfsonian-FIU. This 1927 converted storage facility is a treasure trove of Art Deco artifacts, including an original deco mailbox from NYC's Grand Central Station, pre-Castro Cuban movie posters, and all sorts of propaganda art. ⌚ 1–2 hrs. 1001 Washington Ave. at 10th St. ☎ 305/531-1001. www.wolfsonian.org. \$7. Open Mon–Wed & Sat–Sun noon–6pm; Thurs–Fri noon–9pm.

After satisfying your hunger for knowledge, stop by the Wolfsonian's museum store cum cafe, **6 The Dynamo**, where a side of Fellini with your panini is complimentary. 1001 Washington Ave. ☎ 305/535-2680. \$.

7 ★ Espanola Way. A few blocks north of the Wolfsonian and Art Deco District is South Beach's sublime, if not somewhat touristy, Espanola Way, a block-long Spanish Mediterranean village where galleries, boutiques, street vendors, and cafes line the streets, and a youth hostel now occupies a building that once served as Al Capone's gambling headquarters. Will Smith filmed the music video for his homage to the

Magic City, “Miami,” on these streets. ⌚ 30 min. *Corner of Washington Ave. & 15th St.*

8 ★★ kids Lincoln Road Mall.

This “road” is well traveled by locals who bike, blade, board, or stroll up and down this popular pedestrian thoroughfare. Designed by architectural icon Morris Lapidus, the road is full of cafes, boutiques, requisite Starbucks (two of them so far), art galleries, and theaters. Although most of the stores here are of the chain variety, the people who hang here are hardly cookie-cutter. Stroll, shop, and make sure to stop to gawk at some of the area’s most pampered pooches. If you have a sweet tooth, don’t miss one of Oprah’s favorite places for pies and cakes, **The Ice Box Café**, 1657 Michigan Ave. ☎ 305/538-8448. ⌚ 1 hr.

9 ★★★ kids Holocaust Memorial. Kenneth Triester’s *Sculpture of Love & Anguish* depicts victims of the concentration camps crawling up a giant yearning hand stretching up to the sky, marked with an Auschwitz number tattoo. Along the reflecting pool is the story of the Holocaust, told in cut marble slabs. Inside the center of the memorial is a tableau that is one of the most solemn and moving tributes to the millions of Jews who lost their lives in the Holocaust. ⌚ 1 hr. *1933 Meridian Ave. (at Dade Blvd.).* ☎ 305/538-1663. www.holocaustmmb.org. Free admission. Daily 9am–9pm.

10 ★★★ kids Collins Park. Collins Park Cultural Center comprises a trio of arts buildings on Collins Park and Park Avenue (off Collins Ave.), bounded by 21st to 23rd streets—the newly expanded Bass Museum of Art, the new home of the Miami City Ballet, and the Miami Beach Regional Library, an ultramodern building with a special focus on the arts. The Library Café is on the library’s first



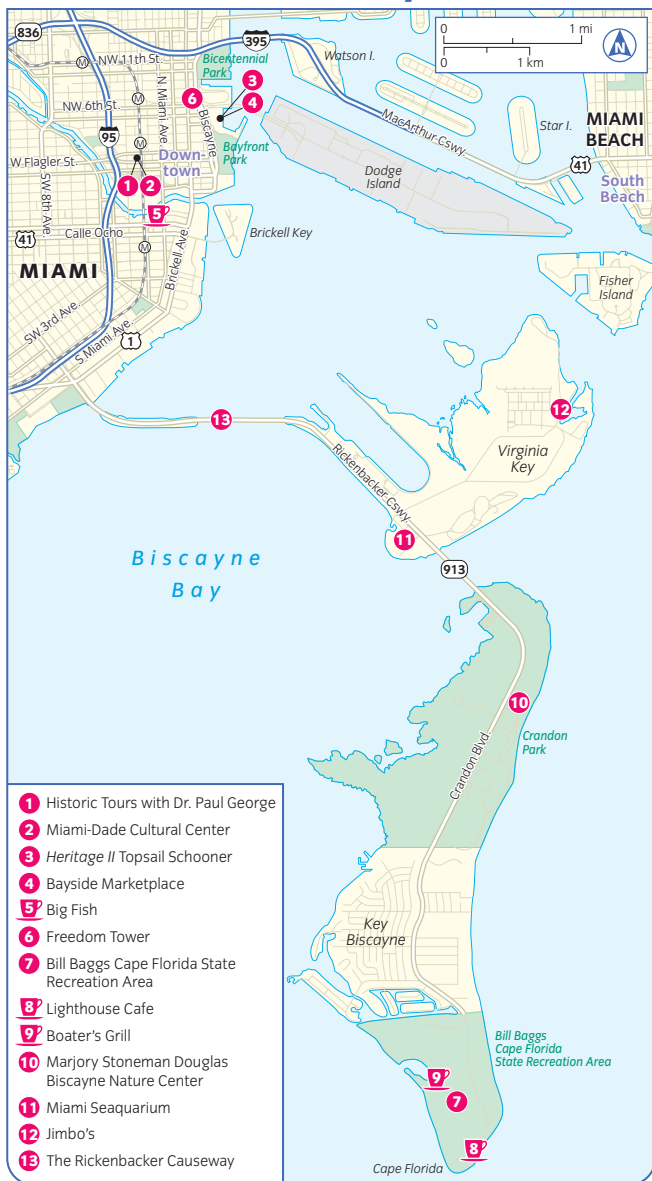
Pre-Castro Cuban movie posters at the Wolfsonian-FIU.

floor, serving coffee and pastries. Collins Park, the former site of the Miami Beach Library, returned to its original incarnation as an open space extending to the Atlantic, but it is also now the site of large sculpture installations and cultural activities planned jointly by the organizations that share the space. ⌚ 1–3 hrs. *2121 Park Ave.* ☎ 305/673-7530. www.bassmuseum.org. Admission \$8 adults, \$6 students & seniors, free for children 6 & under. Free 2nd Thurs of the month 6–9pm. Tues–Wed & Fri–Sat 10am–5pm; Thurs 10am–9pm; Sun 11am–5pm.

Lincoln Road Mall is big with dog walkers and window shoppers.



The Best in Two Days



On your second day in Miami, take a tour with Dr. Paul George, the city's best tour guide, and gain insight into the people, places, and events that shaped the city's tabloid reputation, among other things. Explore the city beyond the beaches and the Hiltons—as in Paris—hit the water with a great boat tour, and finish up back on the beach, this time on Key Biscayne. **START: Historical Museum, 101 W. Flagler St.**

1 ★★★ Historic Tours With Dr. Paul George. Dr. George, a history teacher at Miami-Dade Community College and a historian at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, offers a variety of tours. The “Mystery, Mayhem, and Vice Crime Bus Tour” explores Miami-Dade’s most celebrated crimes and criminals from the 1800s to the present, including sites where the ’80s TV series *Miami Vice* was filmed. Tours focus on neighborhoods such as Little Havana, Brickell Avenue, or Key Biscayne, and on themes such as Miami cemeteries and the Miami River. There are also eco-history coach, walking, and bike tours. The often long-winded discussions can be a bit much for those who just want a quick look around, but Dr. George certainly knows his stuff. ⌚ 3 hrs. 101 W. Flagler St. ☎ 305/375-1621. www.hmsf.org/programs-adult.htm. Tickets \$5–\$44.

2 ★ Miami-Dade Cultural Center. The Phillip Johnson–designed Miami-Dade Cultural Center, located downtown, is a Mediterranean-style complex housing the Miami-Dade Public Library, Historical Museum of Southern Florida, and Miami Art Museum. If you’re not in the mood to spend a sunny day indoors, just hang out in the complex’s splendid courtyard and watch the arty folk and the skyline above. ⌚ 30 min. 101 W. Flagler St., at NW 1st Ave. ☎ 305/375-1700.

3 Heritage II Topsail Schooner. This relaxing ride aboard Miami’s only tall ship is a fun way to see the city and is the only tour company that takes you out on a schooner rather than a cruising boat. The 2-hour cruise passes by Villa Vizcaya, Coconut Grove, and Key Biscayne, and puts you in sight of Miami’s spectacular skyline and

An exhibit at the Miami-Dade Cultural Center.





The Heritage II is the only tour of its kind in the city.

island homes. 🕒 2 hrs. **Bayside Marketplace**, 401 Biscayne Blvd. ☎ 305/442-9697. www.heritageschooner.com. Two-hr. trips at 1:30 & 4pm daily. \$20 adults, \$15 children. Evening trips are 1 hr. at 6:30 & 8pm daily. \$15 adults, \$10 children.

4 kids Bayside Marketplace.

Touristy? Yes. But for some of the best views in the entire city, Bayside's sprawling shopping, dining, and entertainment complex is the place to be, with live salsa bands playing by the water. Despite what locals say, it's still, for better or worse, very Miami. 🕒 30 min. 401 Biscayne Blvd. ☎ 305/577-3344. www.baysidemarketplace.com. Open Mon–Thurs 10am–10pm (Fri–Sat until 11pm); Sun 11am–9pm.

5 Big Fish, one of downtown Miami's most scenic lunch spots, offers prime views of the hustle and bustle of the Miami River as well as fresh pasta and seafood dishes. Popular happy hours make Big Fish a major player for cocktails at sunset. 55 SW Miami Ave. Rd. ☎ 305/373-1770. www.thebigfishmiami.com. \$\$\$.

6 Freedom Tower. The most dramatic presence on the heavily trafficked stretch of Biscayne Boulevard downtown is the Freedom Tower, built in 1925 and modeled after the Giralda Tower in Spain. Once home to the now-defunct *Miami Daily News* and *Metropolis* newspapers, the Freedom Tower was sold in 1957 to the U.S. General

The Freedom Tower is modeled after Spain's Giralda Tower.



Services Administration, which used the building to process more than 500,000 Cubans fleeing the island once Castro took over. Considered the Ellis Island of the Cuban Exile community, Miami's Freedom Tower has remained largely vacant over the years (the government left the building in 1974) despite hopes and unfulfilled plans to turn it into a museum reflecting its historical significance. Most recently, the building was donated to Miami-Dade College by the Terra Group, a condo development company, for use as a museum, cultural center, and classroom space—as long as they allow them to build a 62-story condo behind it. ⌚ 5 min. 600 Biscayne Blvd. at NE 6th St.

7 ★★★ **kids** **Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Recreation Area.** At the southern tip of Key Biscayne, about 20 minutes from downtown Miami, you can explore the unfettered wilds and enjoy some of the most secluded beaches in the city. There's also a historic lighthouse that was built in 1825, which is the oldest lighthouse in South Florida. The lighthouse was damaged during the Second Seminole War (1836) and again in 1861 during the Civil War. Out of commission for a while, it was restored to working condition in 1978 by the U.S. Coast Guard. A rental shack leases bikes, hydrobikes, kayaks, and many more water toys. It's a great place to picnic. Just be careful that the raccoons don't get your lunch—the furry black-eyed beasts are everywhere. Bill Baggs has been consistently rated as one of the top 10 beaches in the U.S. for its $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles (2km) of wide, sandy beaches and its secluded, serene atmosphere. ⌚ 2–4 hr. 1200 S. Crandon Blvd. ☎ 305/361-5811.

www.floridastateparks.org/capeflorida. Admission \$5 per car with up to 8 people; \$3 for a car with only 1 person; \$1 to enter by foot or bicycle. Daily 8am–sunset. Tours of the lighthouse available Thurs–Mon at 10am & 1pm. Arrive at least 30 min. early to sign up—there is room for only 10 people on each tour. Take I-95 to the Rickenbacker Causeway, and take that all the way to the end.

Inside Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Recreation Area, the **8** **Light-house Cafe** ☎ 305/361-8487; \$) is a good option for some quick refreshment. For a snack with a view, try the waterfront **9** **Boat-er's Grill** ☎ 305/361-0080; \$), a well-kept secret offering cold beer, fried fish, and even frogs' legs.

10 **kids** ★★★ **Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center.** Named after the late champion of the Everglades, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center is housed in a \$4 million facility and offers hands-on marine exploration, hikes through coastal hammocks, bike trips, and beach walks. Local environmentalists and historians lead intriguing trips through the local habitat. Call to reserve a spot on a regularly scheduled weekend tour or program. Be sure to wear comfortable, closed-toe shoes for hikes through wet or rocky terrain. ⌚ 1–3 hrs. 6767 Crandon Blvd. ☎ 305/361-6767. www.biscaynenaturecenter.org. Daily 10am–4pm. Admission to the park \$4 per person; admission to the nature center free. Special programs & tours \$10 per person. Call for weekend programs. Take I-95 to the Rickenbacker Causeway (Exit 1),

and take the causeway all the way until it becomes Crandon Blvd. The center is on the east side of the street (the Atlantic Ocean side) and about 25 min. from downtown Miami.

11 kids Miami Seaquarium. If you've been to Orlando's SeaWorld, you may be disappointed with Miami's version, which is considerably smaller and not as well maintained. It's hardly a sprawling seaquarium, but you will want to arrive early to enjoy the effects of its mild splash. The 35-acre (14-hectare) oceanarium has four daily shows starring a number of showy ocean mammals. You can cut your visit short if you limit yourself to the better, albeit corny, Flipper and Killer Whale shows. The highly regarded Dolphin Encounter allows visitors to touch and swim with dolphins in the Flipper Lagoon; the program is available for an extra charge, and reservations are necessary. 🕒 3 hrs. 4400 Rickenbacker Causeway (south side), en route to Key Biscayne. ☎ 305/361-5705. www.miamiseaquarium.com. Admission \$36 adults, \$27 children 3–9, free for children 2 & under. Daily

9:30am–6pm (ticket booth closes at 4pm). Parking \$8.

12 ★★★ kids Jimbo's. There are no napkins or utensils here ("This is a place where you eat with your hands."), but there is the best smoked fish (marlin or salmon) in town at this ramshackle seafood shack, which started as a gathering spot for fishermen. Now you'll find shrimpers, politicians, and well-oiled beach bums alongside stray dogs and chickens (this is not a place to get dressed up—you will get dirty—and the bathroom is rancid). Grab yourself a dollar beer (there's only beer, water, and soda, but you can also BYO) from the cooler and take in the view of the tropical lagoon where they shot *Flipper*; you may even see a manatee or two. The surrounding vacant shacks served as backdrops for films such as *True Lies*. There's a bocce court here, too, and the owner, Jimbo, may challenge you to a game. **Off the Rickenbacker Causeway at Sewerline Rd.** ☎ 305/361-7026. Smoked fish about \$8 a pound. No credit cards. Mon–Fri 6am–6:30pm; Sat–Sun 6am–7:30pm. Head south on the main road toward Key Biscayne,

Catch a dolphin show at the Miami Seaquarium.





A bridge detail at the Rickenbacker Causeway.

make a left just after the MAST Academy (there will be a sign that says VIRGINIA KEY); tell the person in the tollbooth you're going to Jimbo's and he'll point you in the right direction.

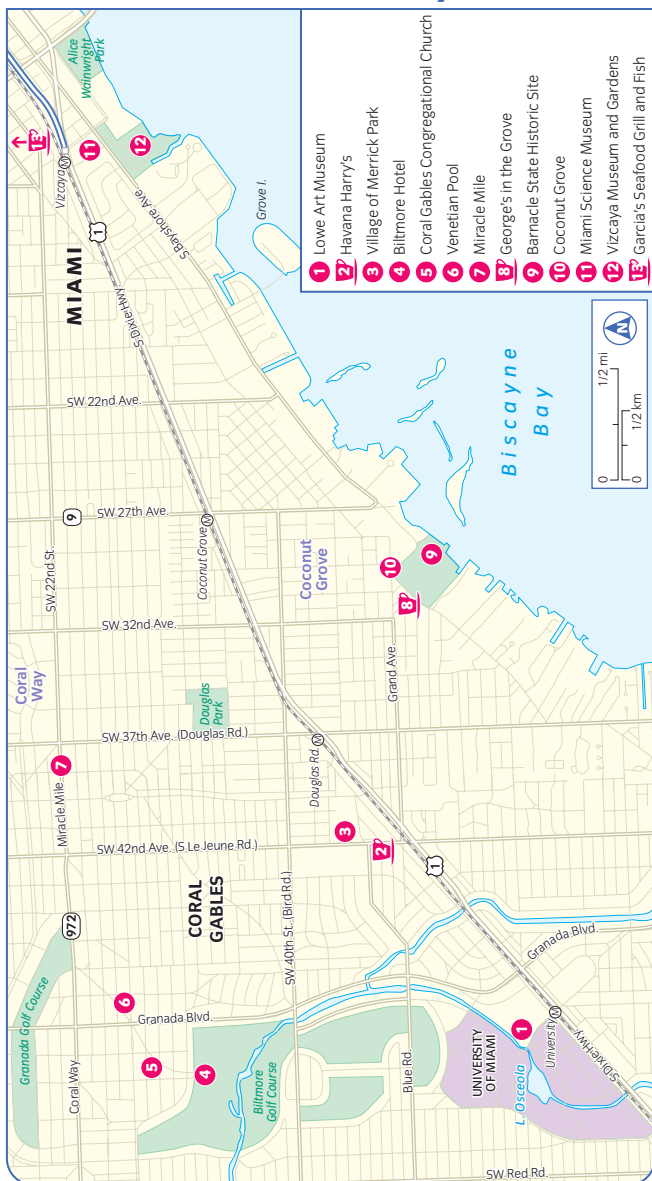
13 The Rickenbacker Causeway. Take advantage of a wonderful photo opportunity at the bridge that arcs from downtown Miami to the first two Florida Keys—Virginia Key and Key Biscayne. 🕒 5 min.

On Location in Miami

With its warm weather, picturesque skylines, and gorgeous sunsets, Miami is the perfect setting for making movies.

Since the earliest days of the film industry, Miami has had a starring role in some of America's most celebrated celluloid classics, from the Marx Brothers' first feature, *The Cocoanuts* (1929), to the 1941 classic, *Citizen Kane*, which used the spectacular South Florida coastline as the setting for Kane's own Hearst Castle, Xanadu. As the film industry evolved and productions became more elaborate, Miami was thrice seized by a suave international man of intrigue known as Bond, James Bond, in *Dr. No*, *Live and Let Die*, and *Goldfinger*. Countless major motion pictures have been filmed in Miami-Dade County, including *Miami Vice*, *True Lies*, *Any Given Sunday*, *There's Something About Mary*, *Random Hearts*, and *Bad Boys II*. Recently, Jennifer Aniston and Owen Wilson romped around the city for the canine tearjerker *Marley & Me*, and George Clooney was also here shooting scenes for his newest flick, *Up In the Air*.

The Best in Three Days



On your third day in Miami, stroll **Coral Gables**, The City Beautiful created by George Merrick in the early 1920s, sporting stunning Mediterranean-style homes and National Historic Landmarks along lush, tree-lined streets that open onto beautifully carved plazas, many with centerpiece fountains. The Gables is also home to some seriously stunning sightseeing, dining, and shopping.

START: Lowe Art Museum, 1301 Stanford Dr. at Ponce de León Blvd.

1 ★★ Lowe Art Museum

Located on the University of Miami campus, the Lowe Art Museum has a dazzling collection of 8,000 works that include American paintings, Latin American art, Navajo and Pueblo Indian textiles, and Renaissance and baroque art. Traveling exhibits, such as *Wine Spectator* magazine's classic posters of the Belle Epoque, also stop here. For the most part, the Lowe is known for its collection of Greek and Roman antiquities, and, as compared to the more modern MOCA, Bass, and Miami Art Museum, features mostly European and international art hailing back to ancient times. 🕒 1 hr. **University of Miami, 1301 Stanford Dr. (at Ponce de León Blvd.).** ☎ 305/284-3603. www.lowe-museum.org. Admission \$10 adults, \$5 seniors and students with ID. Donation day is 1st Tues of the month. Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat

10am–5pm; Thurs noon–7pm; Sun noon–5pm.

2 Havana Harry's, a casual Cuban restaurant in the heart of Coral Gables, is a mom-and-pop eatery serving stellar sweet plantains, *tostones*, and *cortaditos*. 4612 LeJeune Rd. ☎ 305/661-2622. \$.

3 ★ Village of Merrick Park.

Although Miracle Mile is Coral Gables' main downtown shopping area, the sprawling and picturesque Village of Merrick Park is not your average mall. The outdoor shopping mecca is a mammoth, 850,000-square-foot (78,968 sq. km) complex between Ponce de León Boulevard and LeJeune Road, just off the Mile, and is dotted with fountains, lush foliage, and gardens. It houses Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus, Armani,

Outdoor shopping at the Village of Merrick Park.





The Biltmore Hotel is Coral Gables' oldest.

Gucci, Jimmy Choo, and Yves St. Laurent, to name a few. ⌚ 1 hr. 358 San Lorenzo Ave. ☎ 305/529-0200. www.villageofmerrickpark.com. Mon–Sat 10am–9pm; Sun noon–6pm.

4 ★★ **Biltmore Hotel.** A romantic sense of old-world glamour combined with a rich history permeates the Biltmore as much as the pricey perfume of the guests who stay

here. Built in 1926, it's the oldest Coral Gables hotel and is a National Historic Landmark—one of only two operating hotels in Florida to receive that designation. Rising above the Spanish-style estate is a majestic 300-foot (90m) copper-clad tower, modeled after the Giralda bell tower in Seville and visible throughout the city. The landmark 23,000-square-foot (2,137 sq. km) winding pool now has the requisite hipster accessories—private cabana, alfresco bar, and restaurant. Take advantage of a free, 55-minute Sunday walking tour; if it's available, you'll get a look at the Everglades Suite, which has hosted gangsters (Al Capone), dignitaries, heads of state, and celebrities.

⌚ 1 hr. 1200 Anastasia Ave. ☎ 305/445-1926. www.biltmorehotel.com. Free admission. Tours Sun at 1:30, 2:30 & 3:30pm.

5 **Coral Gables Congregational Church.** This Mediterranean revival building is a stunning photo op, designed as a replica of a Costa Rican church. Completed in 1924, the church not only hosts religious ceremonies, but also popular jazz, classical, and folk music concerts and big-name book readings.

The Coral Gables Congregational Church is modeled after a church in Costa Rica.





The Venetian Pool is open to the public for swimming.

🕒 10 min. 3010 DeSoto Blvd. at Anastasia Ave. ☎ 305/448-7421.

6 ★★★ kids Venetian Pool.

Miami's most beautiful and unusual swimming pool, dating from 1924, is hidden behind pastel stucco walls and is honored with a listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Underground artesian wells feed the free-form lagoon, which is shaded by three-story Spanish porticos and has both fountains and waterfalls. It can be cold in the winter months. During summer, the pool's 800,000 gallons of water are drained and refilled nightly, thanks to an underground aquifer, ensuring a cool, clean swim. Visitors are free to swim and sunbathe here, just as Esther Williams and Johnny Weissmuller did decades ago. 🕒 2 hrs. 2701 DeSoto Blvd. (at Toledo St.). ☎ 305/460-5356. www.coralgablesvenetianpool.com. Admission Nov–Mar \$5.50 for those 13 & older, \$3.50 for children 12 & under; Apr–Oct \$10 for those 13 & older, \$6.75 for children 12 & under. Children must be at least 3 years old and provide proof of age with birth certificate, or 38 in. (1m) tall to enter. Daily hours are at least 11am–4:30pm but are often longer.

7 Miracle Mile. Actually only a 1/2-mile (.8km) long, this central shopping street was an integral part of George Merrick's city plan. Originally it encompassed property within the designated geographic area—Douglas Road to LeJeune Road (east–west), and Aragon Avenue to Andalusia Avenue (north–south). In November 2007, the geographic area was expanded to include 1 more block north, making the northern boundary Giralda Avenue. Today the strip still enjoys popularity, especially for its boutiques and upscale restaurants. Recently, newer chain stores, such as Barnes & Noble, Old Navy, and Starbucks, have been appearing on the Mile.

🕒 30 min. ☎ 305/569-0311.

8 George's in the Grove is a modern French bistro, with sleek decor and a sleeker champagne-sipping clientele. Entrees range from classics such as ratatouille and steak frites to a very Miami mango tart tartin. Food is good, but the ambience is better. As the night goes on, music gets louder and a party scene ensues. 3145 Comodore Plaza. ☎ 305/444-7878. \$\$.

9 ★★★ kids Barnacle State Historic Site. The former home of naval architect and early settler Ralph Middleton Munroe is now a museum in the heart of Coconut Grove. It's the oldest house in Miami and rests on its original foundation, which sits on 5 acres (2 hectares) of natural hardwood forest and landscaped lawns. The house's quiet surroundings, wide porches, and period furnishings illustrate how Miami's first snowbird lived in the days before condo mania and luxury hotels. Enthusiastic and knowledgeable state park employees provide a wealth of historical information. The site also hosts sunset yoga (Wed 6–7:30pm) and monthly moonlight concerts (picnicking is encouraged).

🕒 1 hr. 3485 Main Hwy. (1 block south of Commodore Plaza). 📞 305/448-9445. Admission \$1. Concerts \$5; free for children 9 & under.

Fri–Mon 9am–4pm. Tours Fri–Mon 10am, 11:30am, 1pm & 2:30pm.

From downtown Miami, take U.S. 1 south to 27th Ave., make a left, and

continue to S. Bayshore Dr.; then make a right, follow to the intersection of Main Hwy., and turn left.

10 Coconut Grove. An arty, hippie hangout in the psychedelic '60s, Coconut Grove once had residents who dressed in swirling tie-dyed garb. Nowadays, they prefer the uniform color schemes of the Gap. Chain stores, theme restaurants, a megaplex, and bars galore make Coconut Grove a commercial success, but this gentrification (plus the Ritz-Carlton Coconut Grove and the Mayfair hotels) has pushed most alternative types out. The intersection of Grand Avenue, Main Highway, and McFarlane Road pierces the area's heart. Right in the center of it all is CocoWalk, filled with boutiques, eateries, and bars. Sidewalks here are often crowded, especially at night, when University of Miami students come out to play. 🕒 2 hrs.

11 kids Miami Science Museum. Science is fascinating, yes, but even better at this museum

Barnacle State Historic Site hosts sunset yoga on Wednesday evenings.





Interactive exhibits at the Miami Science Museum.

is its Wildlife Center, featuring more than 175 live reptiles and birds of prey. There are also more than 140 hands-on exhibits that explore the mysteries of the universe. Live demonstrations and collections of rare natural history specimens make a visit here fun and informative. 🕒 1 hr. 3280 S. Miami Ave.

(just south of the Rickenbacker Causeway). ☎ 305/646-4200. www.miamisci.org. Admission \$18 adults, \$16 seniors & students, \$13 children 3–12, free for children 2 & under. Daily 10am–6pm; 1st Fri of every month 10am–10pm; call for show times (last show is at 4pm weekdays & 5pm on weekends).

Digging Miami

During a routine investigation at the mouth of the Miami River in September 2008, archaeologists discovered a circular structure cut into the bedrock, 38 feet (11m) in diameter, with intentional markings of the cardinal directions, as well as a 5-foot-long (1.5m) shark and two stone axes. These suggested the circle had ceremonial significance to Miami's earliest inhabitants—the Tequesta Indians. Radiocarbon tests confirmed the circle to be about 2,000 years old. Most scholars believe that the discovery represents the foundation of a circular structure, perhaps a council house or a chief's house. Local preservationists formed an organization, Save the Miami Circle, to ensure that developers don't raze the circle to make way for condominiums. For now, the circle remains put, albeit surrounded by cranes constructing mega-condos. See www.miamicircle.org for more information.

Hispanic Heritage Tour

For those looking to immerse themselves in Miami's rich Latin-American culture, the **Herencia Hispana Tour** is the ideal way to explore it all. Hop on a bus and zoom past such hotbeds of Latin activity as downtown's Flagler Street, the unavoidable Elian Gonzalez house, and Little Havana's Domino Park and Tower Theater, among others. Not just a sightseeing tour, this one includes two very knowledgeable, albeit corny, guides who know just when to infuse a necessary dose of humor into the Elian saga, a segment of history that some people may not consider so amusing. Tours depart at 9, 9:30, and 10am every Saturday in October from the Steven P. Clark Government Center, 111 NW 1st St. ☎ 305/770-3131. www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/transit/hispanicher.asp. Tours (in Spanish or English, but you must specify which one you require) are free, but advanced reservations are required.

12 ★★★ kids Vizcaya Museum and Gardens. Sometimes referred to as the "Hearst Castle of the East," this magnificent villa was built in 1916 as a winter retreat for James Deering, cofounder and former vice president of International Harvester. The industrialist was fascinated by 16th-century art and architecture, and his ornate mansion, which took 1,000 artisans 5 years to build, became a celebration of that period. It's packed with European relics and works of art from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Most of the original furnishings, including dishes and paintings, are still intact. A free guided tour of the 34 furnished rooms on the first floor takes about 45 minutes. The second floor, which consists mostly of bedrooms, is open to tour on your own. The

villa surrounds a central courtyard, and lush formal gardens, accented with statuary, balustrades, and decorative urns, front an enormous swath of Biscayne Bay. ⌚ 2–3 hr. **3251 S. Miami Ave.** (just south of Rickenbacker Causeway). ☎ 305/250-9133. www.vizcayamuseum.com. Admission \$15 adults, \$10 seniors, \$6 children 6–12, free for children 5 & under. Villa daily 9:30am–5pm (ticket booth closes at 4:30pm); gardens daily 9:30am–5:30pm.

13' Garcia's Seafood Grill and Fish, on the banks of the Miami River, has a fairly simple yet tasty menu of fresh fish and a great, gritty ambience that takes you away from neon, neo-Miami in favor of the old seafaring days. **398 NW N. River Dr.** ☎ 305/375-0765. \$. ●