

TRAVEL

★5A

O&E Monday, December 30, 1991



crossroads
Iris Jones

Place to be is 'SoBe'

Trendy art deco area attracts visitors from around the world

By Martha Spence
special writer

Sandy beach, a sparkling ocean and people chatting in French, German, Spanish and English. Where are you? Europe, maybe? No. Try Miami's trendy South Beach area nicknamed "SoBe."

It's like New York's Greenwich Village, attracting visitors and artists from around the world.

Since 1985 the square-mile historic district has had a \$150 face lift that makes it the most spectacular art deco district in the country. Ocean Drive and its surrounding area are lined with pastel shaded hotels, dating back to the 1920s. The major restoration has lured film producers (the backdrop for many scenes from the Miami Vice series) and European fashion photographers.

In 1980, 52 percent of Miami Beach's population was over 65, but it's only 30 percent today. Girls in hot pink spandex shorts speed by on roller blades. Young couples cruise the strip on bikes. Jamaicans with tightly braided dreadlocks pass by an elder orthodox Jewish man with his long beard and traditional black garb.

ART DECO buildings depict classic styles from early 1900s Mediterranean to 1930s Streamlined Moderne: curved corners, round "porthole" windows, pipe railings,

horizontal racing stripes and key-stones dyed in green or pink.

The lobby of the Essex House hotel off 10th Street and Collins features a baby grand piano amid tall potted palms. Geometric multi-colored mirrors share walls with a mural of Indians canoeing in the Everglades.

The Essex has terrazzo floors, wrought iron handrails, flamingoes etched into glass windows, lacquered ceiling fans and porthole windows that create a cruise ship atmosphere. Rooms start at \$65. Call toll-free (800) 555-7739.

The Park Central Hotel, in the hub of Ocean Drive activity, has rooms with mahogany ceiling fans, palm printed carpets, period furniture and authentic black and white photographs from the '30s. Summer rates start at \$60, winter rates at \$95. Call (305) 538-1611.

The Cavalier, which epitomizes the classic styles of the era, has wicker chairs potted palms, mirrors, tile, brass and an elevator with a porthole window. Upstairs, stucco walls in a rainbow of colors brighten rooms that have walnut bed headboards, russet carpets and art deco paintings. Winter rates range from \$45 to \$87, summer, \$32 to \$75, including breakfast. Call toll-free (800) 338-9076.

THE MAIN attraction of South Beach is surf and sand. Miami Beach marina has boats for charter, for fishing and sailing enthusiasts. Check out the museums and art galleries, especially Bass Museum, and



Photo by MICKY JONES

The News Cafe on Ocean Drive in the art deco area of Miami Beach, Fla., is the most popular place to see and be seen.

two tours: the Art Deco District walking tour offered each Saturday morning by the Miami Design Preservation League and the Old Town Trolley Tour that runs daily stopping at several Miami Beach landmark attractions.

The News Cafe is the most popular place to see and be seen. They claim the freshest salads in town. Lulu's on Washington Avenue specializes in chicken-fried steak, fried catfish and "real" mashed potatoes, lumps and all. Looking for fine Ital-

ian pastas? Head for Mezzanotte on Washington Avenue, where the Italian music has inspired couples to dance in the aisles. For seafood lovers, Joe's Stone Crabs is unbeatable.

Tropics International is noted for its cool jazz, reggae and funky blues. Right next door at the Breakwater Hotel you can sip a cocktail at the pink and blue neon-lighted bar. Le Loft has one of the most upscale, lavish interiors and music selection to match its clientele.

There is the Friday night concert

series at the South Pointe Park Amphitheater. Bring a picnic and blanket and enjoy an evening under the stars to the sounds of jazz, rock or classical rhythms. Also, the Jackie Gleason Theater of the Performing Arts features the best of Broadway, renowned orchestras and dance companies.

Whether your pleasure is simply shopping, people watching or being a beach bum, there are endless ways to spend hours in the "City by the Sea."

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