

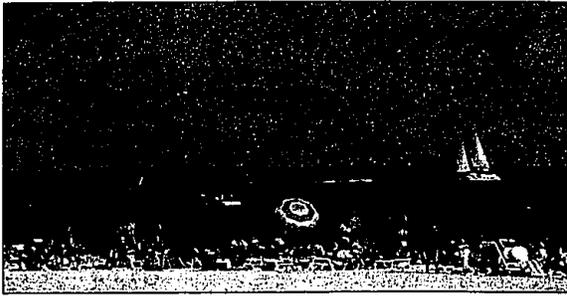
South Florida has cultural appeal

BY NORMA AND WENDY SCHONWETTER
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Is South Florida beckoning to you to enjoy the winter warmth or a relaxing cruise? Then don't miss South Beach, the crown jewel of South Florida.

South Beach, occupying less than two square miles on the southern tip of Miami Beach has developed its own identity. Once the bastion of Jewish immigrants and wintering tourists from the North, South Beach has much to offer. It has become known for its Art Deco Historic District and is on the National Register of Historic Places because of the large concentration of classic 1920s and 1930s architecture located there. Once a retirement district on the decline, it has been revitalized and redeveloped. It is a hot spot for locals, transient celebrities and tourists. With its golden beaches and trendy restaurants, clubs, fashion boutiques and art galleries, South Beach is a favorite year-round playground for people of all ages.

The cheery pastel pinks, bright aqua and canary yellows of South Beach's Ocean Drive hotels are in stark contrast to the poignant Holocaust Memorial nearby. Constructed of Jerusalem stone and marble, life-sized sculptures of Holocaust victims struggle to climb an out-



Sailors and sunbathers enjoy the ocean in South Florida.

stretched bronze arm and hand reaching skyward. Lit up at night, it is a startlingly beautiful image.

MUSEUMS

Nearby the Ziff Museum depicts Florida's Jewish history since 1763, along with historical and contemporary life and culture all over the world. Housed in a beautiful 1936 art deco synagogue that served as an Orthodox synagogue for Miami Beach's first Jewish congregation, it features nearly 80 stained glass windows, a copper dome

and a marble tomb reading platform. Stunning chandeliers and scenes are among the fabulous art deco items featured.

A few blocks farther down Washington Avenue is The Wolfsonian, a museum of art and design from 1885-1945. This unusual museum holds an astounding collection of art in its 14 galleries.

Not too far away the Bass Museum displays a comprehensive collection of Old Master paintings, sculpture, textiles and period furniture in South Florida. A unique exhibit of room-size installations done

entirely in beads, rich tapestry, and works of Toulouse-Lautrec are noteworthy. Currently closed, the museum is undergoing an expansion and is due to open near the end of the year.

The arts thrive here. Home to the Miami City Ballet, the New World Symphony, the Jackie Gleason Theater (a great place to see Broadway Shows), and the Miami Beach Convention Center (site of major exhibitions and events), South Beach is a center for world-class performing arts.

Stunning formal gardens and an Italian-Renaissance-style villa were the winter residence of International Harvester executive James Deering, and are not to be missed. Built between 1914 and 1916 and situated on beautiful Biscayne Bay, the 34-room mansion contains antique furnishings and decorative arts from the 16th to 19th centuries. The beautiful grounds encompass over 10 acres of formal gardens and fountains.

All that culture can give you a hearty appetite. You can eat your way around the world in Miami. There are a wealth of cuisines in the dozens of restaurants within a few blocks that offer foods of the Caribbean (French, African, Indian, Dutch, Creole), Central and South America and Cuba. There is an abundance of fresh tropical fruits and vegetables, seafood, spices and other ingredients that



A peaceful beach at sunrise in South Florida.

IF YOU GO

Lido Spa: (800) 327-8363 or go to Web site www.lidospa.com
Information and vacation planner: Call Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau at (888) 76-MIAMI or go to Web site www.miamianbeaches.com
Norton Museum of Art: www.norton.org
Flagler Museum: www.flagler.org

Miami. The spa is minutes from the famous Art Deco District. If you choose the spa cuisine you might be able to lose a few pounds... If you can resist the desserts.

For a terrific day trip, consider Palm Beach, just a couple hours up the coast. Besides being the home to the PGA there are two spectacular museums worth seeing.

The Flagler Museum is a stunning example of the Gilded Age and was a wedding present from land developer, oil and railroad magnate Henry Flagler to his third wife. From the minute you walk into Marble Hall, the 4,400-square-foot foyer, you are enchanted with the art, whims and whimsy of its owners. Marble Hall seems smaller than a warehouse store because Flagler asked the ceiling to be dropped eight feet below the original design in order to give the room a more intimate feel. In fact, although it is clear by the artwork, furnishings, and virtually every square inch from floor and ceiling that Flagler could afford almost anything, the elegance was infused with a functionality and warmth often missing in homes of this grand scale.

The Norton Museum of Art is just back across the Intercoastal Waterway on Olive, south of Okeechobee Blvd. This museum is in the process of being expanded and renovated, to become the largest art museum in the State of Florida. On Sundays there are artists, musicians and performers highlighting children's programs, as well as an exhibition lecture series. Even their gift shop now has pieces of signed Chihuly art glass. This museum is well worth the visit, before heading back to the Lido Spa for your free massage.

chefs have developed into a style of cooking known as "Floribbean." Be sure to try stone crabs, a South Beach specialty, at Joe's, the cuisine of Cuba at Yuca restaurant, Asian rim cuisine at Bambu (terrific appetizers), dinner at Mark's or Wish, and desserts at Nemo.

AT THE SPA

After you've had your fill of museums and shows, come home at night to the modestly priced Lido Spa. Situated on a private island in the heart of Miami Beach, the soothing ambiance includes some amazing perks. Three delicious meals and a massage are provided free daily. It's a short drive from the Miami airport or Miami Beach area or call for their free shuttle. Other activities include exercise classes, nightly entertainment, two pools, and a hot tub. A shuttle will even take you to the museums and malls, in either South Beach or downtown



Colorful building facades highlight art deco design in South Beach.



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