



GREATER MIAMI CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

701 Brickell Avenue, Suite 2700

Miami, Florida 33131

305/539-3084, Fax 305/539-2911

<http://www.MiamiAndBeaches.com>

E-mail: Media@MiamiAndBeaches.com

Contact: Media Relations, 305-539-3084, 800-955-3646 (U.S./Canada)

BEYOND CIRCUIT PARTIES: MIAMI WELCOMES GAY AND LESBIAN VISITORS

(MIAMI) – One of the hottest spots in the gay universe for its hospitality and sexy, sun-splashed vibe, Greater Miami has been famously rolling out the welcome mat for gay men and lesbians from around the world for more than two decades. The city continues to earn accolades, with the 2008 Reader's Choice Awards, sponsored by Outtraveler.com, naming Miami as one of the top three gay travel destinations in the U.S. The popular website gushed: "The chic atmosphere of Ocean Drive, the happy hubbub of Lincoln Road and South Beach's gay-friendly sands continue to sparkle."

Sophisticated and seductive South Beach rocks with a sizzling array of very gay-friendly and specifically gay-oriented restaurants and nightspots. And it all shifts into overdrive when Miami hosts three of the planet's foremost "circuit" events:

- **White Party Week** (www.whiteparty.net) – Held each November, this week of fund-raising parties and events culminates with the legendary White Party. More than 15,000 party-goers enjoy six days and nights of non-stop entertainment in the fight against HIV/AIDS.
- **Winter Party** (www.winterparty.com) – Featuring an extraordinary lineup of celebrity DJs, this week in March is jammed with parties and events that lead up to the world-renowned beach dance party at the end. All proceeds benefit the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force and local Miami-Dade LGBT organizations.

- **Aqua Girl** (www.aquagirl.com) – Billed as the largest women's charity weekend in the country, this event is held each May in a variety of locations in Miami Beach. This year's lineup includes a night of comedy, four unique evenings of dance parties, a women's art exhibit, a dining event, a wet-and-wild pool party, a jazz brunch, first annual mega beach party, a girl's rock concert and more.
- **Gay Pride Parade** (www.miamibeachgaypride.com) The city of Miami Beach made history on April 18, 2009 when it hosted the first ever Gay Pride Parade for the city. Over 40 floats lined up the length of Ocean Drive along the Art Deco district which was closed to the traffic and open wide to proud Miami lesbian, gay, bi, and transgender families.

Beyond all the glitz, glamour and partying till dawn, Miami boasts a sophisticated, multi-faceted scene in South Beach and well beyond. Coconut Grove, Coral Gables, Little Havana and Bal Harbour vie with South Beach and downtown Miami to offer up a head-spinning mix of world-class lodging, dining, culture, shopping and eco-tourism.

While South Beach has long been known as the "Gay Riviera" and has attracted the LGBT crowd with its stunning collection of Art Deco gems and boutique hotels, the luxury lodging scene has been heating up across Greater Miami. In the span of just a few years, three new Ritz-Carlton Hotels, a Four Seasons, Mandarin Oriental and The Setai opened their doors. The legendary Morris Lapidus-designed Fountainebleau and Eden Roc resorts, made famous by the 1950's Rat Pack, recently received multimillion-dollar makeovers, while the hottest newcomers include the W Hotel, Canyon Ranch and Cipriani South Beach Ocean Resort and Club Residences.

Those who can't imagine leaving home without their feline or canine companions will find Miami to be extraordinarily pet-friendly. Hotels welcome guests traveling with their faithful four-legged friends an extraordinary array of offerings, ranging from the basic necessities of comfortable beds and water bowls to spa treatments, doggie yoga, yappy hours, jewel-studded collars, special menus, pet turndown service, puppy pagers, play dates, grooming services and much more.

A Vibrant, Multicultural Dining Scene

No class of offerings is more diverse and sometimes exotic than Miami's dining scene. The birthplace of Nuevo Latino cuisine, Miami is home to some of America's hottest chefs, who dish up award-winning fare. And though heavily Latin-flavored, Greater Miami's multi-ethnic gumbo lets galloping-gourmet visitors make their way around the world on any budget. Especially enticing is August-September's **Miami Spice Restaurant Month**, which offers special prix fixe prices at dozens of the city's top restaurants. **The Food Network South Beach Wine & Food Festival** (www.sobewineandfoodfest.com), to be held on February 19-22, 2009 this year, is also not to be missed.

When it comes to nightlife, Miami is red hot. Among favorite gay hangouts are: **Club Azucar** (www.clubazucar.com), **The Palace, Score** (www.scorebar.net), **Twist** (www.twistsobe.com), **Halo** (www.haloloungemiami.com) and **The Laundry Bar** (www.laundrybar.com). Many other mixed or mostly gay nightspots are peppered throughout downtown and out to the heavily Latin areas to the west and south. Here, you'll get a taste of a bigger cross-section of gay Latinoamérica than anyplace else in the hemisphere.

In recent years, party promoters have also elevated gay nightlife to a new level. Edison Farrow's **SoBe Social Club** (www.sobesocialclub.com) is a prime example. Now in its seventh year, his Martini Tuesday is a weekly cocktail party that meets at 9:00 p.m. every Tuesday at a different venue to bring together gay locals and visitors for cocktails and conversation. Farrow has also been promoting "Simple Life Thursdays" for the past three years at the Buck15 Lounge. Gay men strut their stuff with the fashionistas to the sounds of hot hip-hop, dance and pop tracks by DJ Daisy D. **Mango Miami** (www.mangomiami.com) covers similar ground for gay men.

Women's promoters include **Pandora Events** (www.pandoraevents.com) **Icandee Productions** (www.icandeeproductions.com), **Even Interrupted** (www.eveinterrupted.com) and **Ultra Events** (www.ultra-events.com). Each offers theme nights, weekly parties and special events at various club spaces throughout Greater Miami. Pink Fridays, a Pandora event held at the Soho Lounge every Friday, for instance, is known for its hot bartenders, wild go-go girls and the foxiest of Miami's lesbian population getting down to reggae, hip-hop and salsa.

The **Miami Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce** also sponsors monthly social and professional gatherings and its website (www.gogaymiami.com) is a great resource for up-to-the-minute information about gay happenings. Likewise, **Coral GAYbles** (www.coralgaybles.com) sponsors monthly socials at various hotels, restaurants and clubs.

Turning to sustenance for the soul, drama aficionados will love Greater Miami's plethora of performing arts venues and theaters for every conceivable taste and pocketbook, from salsa to symphonies and blues to ballet. Making its debut in October 2006 was the Cesar Pelli-designed **Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami Dade County** (www.arshtcenter.org). Modeled after "purpose-built" performance halls like New York's Lincoln Center, the magnificent venue includes the 2,200-seat Carnival Symphony Hall, the 2,400-seat Sanford and Dolores Ziff Ballet Opera House, and a 200-seat black box Studio Theatre. Four nationally esteemed companies are now in residence: the **Concert Association of Florida, Florida Grand Opera, Miami City Ballet** and the **New World Symphony**.

Miami's abundance of art galleries and museums can hold its own with those of most major American cities. Visitors could spend the better part of a week just prowling through the likes of Miami Beach's Wolfsonian and Bass Museums; the Lowe Museum of Art in Coral Gables; downtown's Miami Art Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art off Biscayne Boulevard on Miami's increasingly hip (and gay) "upper East Side."

Underscoring Miami's growing stature as one of the world's preeminent centers for art culture is **Art Basel Miami Beach** (www.artbaselmiamibeach.com), which has become the most talked about art event in the United States. This sister fair to Art Basel Switzerland has become more celebrity-packed, exhilarating and successful each year since its auspicious debut in America in December 2002. Five days of exhibits, A-list parties, lectures, alternative and crossover events and ancillary exhibits rage nonstop for the crème de la crème of the international art world.

A significant chunk of Miami's culture is specifically oriented to gay and lesbian audiences, such as the annual **Gay and Lesbian Film Festival** (www.mglff.com) to be held this year April 24-May 3, 2009. The festival showcases groundbreaking world cinema, and also holds special screenings throughout the year. Venues like the Shores

Performing Arts Theatre in Miami Shores regularly feature gay-themed works by lavender footlights.

Shopping and the Great Outdoors

Also raised to an art form in Miami is America's true national sport – shopping! From the funky, sometimes outré shops of SoBe to the chic boutiques of the Grove and the Gables, there's something for every taste and wallet. And don't pass up a visit to the classic Bal Harbour Shops, America's top-grossing shopping center. It boasts nearly 100 upscale retailers, along with special events and fine dining. Meanwhile, interior design enthusiasts will get a charge out of the **Miami Design District**, just above downtown, with 18 blocks of showrooms, boutiques and art galleries that span just about every taste and time period.

Then, of course, the great outdoors comes in all shapes, sizes and speeds in America's most sun-worshipping big city. The gay scene at SoBe's 12th Street Beach has been celebrated far and wide, but 20 minutes north, the gay section of Haulover Beach Park is just as popular with locals, if not more so (maybe something to do with the clothing-optional stretch?). Meanwhile, 20 minutes south on Key Biscayne, the beach at Bill Baggs State Park is more low-key and romantically picturesque, complete with a lighthouse. Or avoid sand in your suit at the Gables' lush, romantic Venetian Pool, where a strong gay contingent frolics amid the waterfalls and grottoes along with everyone else.

Don't forget, too, that you can combine the outdoors with culture by taking a number of cool biking and walking tours of South Beach's Deco District and other colorful parts of Miami. Or, time your visit to participate in the annual 3.1-mile (5K) AIDS Walk Miami, which will be coupled this year with a new Gay Pride Event to be held April 18-19, 2009. (Thanks to a change in Florida law, the Gay Pride flag flew over city hall for the first time ever on October 10, 2008.)

For the more active, there's volleyball on SoBe's gay beach, as well as windsurfing and snorkeling off Key Biscayne, zooming along the Intracoastal Waterway on wave runners, canoeing near Vizcaya (the elegant mansion that is the site of the White Party), plenty of golf and tennis and, of course, skimming across the Everglades in

an airboat. Take it to the next level with a new series of expert-guided eco-adventure tours, which let you hike, bike, kayak, and snorkel through the area's top nature sites.

To provide helpful information about accommodations, tours, attractions, nightlife and other facets of Miami, the Miami-Dade Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce has published a comprehensive new gay and lesbian travel guide, "Miami: Diversity Celebrated Daily." For a copy, visit www.GoGayMiami.com or call 305-573-4000. The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMCVB) is an independent not-for-profit sales and marketing organization whose mission is to attract visitors to Greater Miami and the Beaches for leisure, business and conventions. For a vacation guide, visit our website at www.MiamiAndBeaches.com or call 1-888-76-Miami (US/Canada only) or 305-447-7777. To reach the GMCVB offices dial 305-539-3000. Meeting planners may call 1-800-933-8448 (US/Canada only) or 305-539-3071 or visit www.MiamiMeetings.com.

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