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QUIRKY AND CHARMING: OFFBEAT MIAMI'S SECRET CHARMS

(Miami) – While world-famous Ocean Drive and its Art Deco architecture, the Everglades, and other popular family attractions will always beckon visitors to Miami, there is another side of the city for those who like to spice up their holidays with a dash of the unexpected and under-touristed. With an agenda comprising locals' favorites that have been around forever and the latest up-and-coming neighborhoods and attractions, the savvy traveler can meander well off the beaten path, discovering a whole slate of ethnic, geographic, cultural and often whimsical charms.

As visitors check off the items on their Miami "must do" list, it is easy to find the road less traveled, even in the midst of some of the city's most popular destinations. Deep in the heart of bustling Coconut Grove, the **Barnacle Historic State Park** houses the oldest home in its original location in Miami, designed and built by Commodore Ralph Middleton Munroe, one of Miami's early pioneers. Here in this peaceful spot overlooking Biscayne Bay, one can imagine life in South Florida's nascent days, before any roads had been built.

Just south of Coconut Grove, Coral Gables is also home to the **Venetian Pool**, an 820,000-gallon swimming pool built in 1923 from a coral rock quarry. Considered one of the world's most unique and breathtaking municipal swimming pools, the pool is spring-fed and the beautiful coral rock keeps the water nice and cool even in the summer sun.

While **Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden** is known around the world, the lesser known, 600-acre state park, **Matheson Hammock**, has been attracting naturalists and outdoorsmen for years. With its well-marked nature trails and lovely island-pool lagoon Matheson Hammock is a great, un-crowded destination for families and nature-lovers alike. **Red Fish Grill**, a truly magical out-of-the-way restaurant located at the far end of the park, is housed in the original Matheson Hammock beach pavilion, hewn from coral rock cut and quarried

onsite.

The Other Miami Beach

South Beach, a. k .a. “the American Riviera,” draws throngs to its world renowned Art Deco District and the candy-colored hotels on famed **Ocean Drive**, its legendary beaches and night spots, and to **Lincoln Road**, a wonderful pedestrian promenade that features great al fresco dining, funky shops, art studios and theaters. Of course you need to see it, but how about trying something a little different? A great way to experience South Beach glamour is to do a Collins Avenue hotel crawl. There's no cost -- and no car necessary -- to wander from luxury oceanfront hotel to hotel, checking out the stunning lobbies, gorgeous pools and perhaps lingering over a signature martini at a poolside bar in celebrity haunts like the Shore Club, Raleigh, Delano, The Ritz-Carlton South Beach, The Gansevort Hotel, The National and Sagamore hotels.

Lower in profile than Lincoln Road and other busy thoroughfares, but no less charming, is **Espanola Way**, an enchanting neighborhood with a European flavor, cafés, art galleries one-of-a-kind boutiques and a farmer's market on weekends. The **Miami Beach Botanical Garden** is a peaceful and lush spot for meditation and reflection, and for those who want to experience a truly original museum, **The Wolfsonian-FIU** contains the country's largest collection of twentieth-century German, Italian, and American political propaganda. The **World Erotic Art Museum (WEAM)** opened its doors in South Beach to feature a collection of erotic art valued at over \$10 million.

At the bottom of Miami Beach, the emerging SoFi (South of Fifth) neighborhood is more relaxed than the go-go Art Deco District. Here, stroll quiet streets and discover the **Jewish Museum of Florida**, Miami Beach's repository of Jewish culture and history in Florida. Stop by the **Miami Beach Victory Garden**, a community vegetable garden that honors Miami Beach's wartime contributions during WWII with a stunning decorative fence and visit **South Pointe Park**, a great locals' beach where kites fly and surfers ride the waves.

A bit further up the beach, **North Beach**, a revitalized neighborhood with unpretentious charms, great local restaurants and uncrowded beaches boasts plenty of parking, inviting oceanfront cafés, quaint shops and an uninterrupted concentration of MiMo (Miami Modern) 50s- and 60s-era apartment buildings that give the entire neighborhood a unique character. Start off in the morning with a MiMo walking tour and discover the particular form of mid-century modernism that is unique to Miami Beach and then unwind at North Shore Park. Mosey over to a local restaurant for an Argentine, Italian, Thai or Greek feast, then take

in the farmer's market for fresh produce or unique bargain gifts.

Truly Off the Beaten Path

Key Biscayne, renowned for its swanky resorts, world-class tennis center and beaches continually ranked among the top in the nation, is also home to one of Miami's best kept secrets. **Jimbo's**, a ramshackle shantytown hidden down a lane on Virginia Key, is a gathering spot for local fishermen who come by boat to stock up on bait, as well as colorful local characters and in-the-know locals. Smoking garbage cans, wandering chickens and stray dogs are the background for exceptional smoked fish and coolers filled with beer, water and soda. You may recognize the surroundings from the countless high-fashion photo shoots, commercials and feature films that have been shot there. Another marked contrast to Key Biscayne's upscale resorts, **The Donut Gallery**, is a great place for a casual breakfast, with locals lining up to get in on the weekends.

Urban Miami holds many open secrets – **Jumbo's**, a Liberty City restaurant that turned 50 in 2005 was one of the first Miami restaurants to integrate in the 1960s. The 24-hour soul-food joint serves up Southern specialties to celebrity Miamians like Lenny Kravitz. In Little Haiti, **Churchill's Pub**, a local neighborhood English pub, draws crowds for live music in a neighborhood where Creole is spoken more frequently than the Queen's mother tongue. Downtown, **Tobacco Road**, another venerable music joint, is a legend, a former speakeasy and gambling hall, that has survived many attempts to revoke its liquor license (the oldest one in Miami) and close it down, but still the neighborhood hangout survives and offers live music seven nights a week. In Little Havana, beyond the mamey milkshakes and old men playing dominoes, there's a great place to go to dance to Latin music, **Hoy Como Ayer**. A favorite among locals and Latin Americans, occasional gringo and tourist sightings are reported during the club's jam-packed live music nights. Little Havana is also the location for **Viernes Culturales** (Cultural Fridays), a monthly event that turns Calle Ocho (Eighth Street) into an outdoor art gallery and festival. The last Friday of each month, the streets fill with the sights, sounds, and tastes of historic Little Havana.

Arts and design are also alive and well in downtown Miami. The edgy, emerging **Wynwood Arts District** is starting to attract some major collectors in addition to the established **Rubell Family Collection**, one of the nation's most important collections of contemporary art. The **Museum of Contemporary Art** of North Miami recently opened **MOCA at Goldman Warehouse**, which also showcases art from the personal collection of urban visionary and South Beach pioneer Tony Goldman. The **Margulies Warehouse** and **The**

Boxing Club, as well as many individual galleries and artists studios, have opened their doors in the evolving neighborhood.

Artists, designers, restaurateurs and entrepreneurs have flocked to the equally compelling **Miami Design District**, a center for Miami's style and design leaders and a great place to shop for furniture and accessories, or just catch up on the latest design trends. Just north of the district along Biscayne Boulevard, the transformation continues, with great local spots like **C. Madeleine** for vintage clothes, **Dogma**, the trendy gourmet hot dog stand and other vintage boutiques and funky cafés easily discovered by the urban adventurer.

North Miami is home to the **Museum of Contemporary Art** – a modernist building offering great traveling shows and works of local artists. The neighborhood is also home to local galleries showing cutting edge Miami and international artists, as well as a plethora of funky antique and vintage stores. In North Miami Beach, just off of the busy highways, the leafy and peaceful **Ancient Spanish Monastery**, originally built in Segovia in the 11th century, was brought over and reconstructed stone-by-stone, is a great out-of-the-way find.

Offbeat Tours

Anyone interested in learning more about the history of Miami, its ecosystems and its various communities would be wise to sign up for a tour with **Dr. Paul George**, local historian and Miami Dade College professor. Dr. George regularly leads walking, coach and boat tours that cover almost every facet of Miami history, past and present. Join Dr. George on a boat trip to **Stiltsville**, a remnant community of six houses perched on stilts in the middle of crystal turquoise waters. Now a part of Biscayne National Park, Stiltsville was, in its heyday, the site of legendary parties and scandalous activities. Dr. George also leads the *Many Faces of Miami* coach tour, which travels by bus through some of Miami's most ethnic neighborhoods, including Little Haiti, Overtown and Allapattah.

Miami Duck Tours offer a decidedly unique way to explore Miami by land and sea. As you glide through downtown Miami and South Beach aboard "vesicles" that look like ducks on wheels, your guide quacks on about landmarks and encourages you to interact with the locals. Next thing you know you are cruising into Biscayne Bay, passing celebrity mansions from the water. Experience Miami **GoCar Tours**, the worlds first GPS-Guided, Storytelling Cars and zip all over town while this little yellow car takes you on a GPS-guided tour. Your talking GoCar navigates and shows you the way – but that's not all. As you enjoy the drive, it takes you to all the best sites and tells the stories that bring this unique city to life. It's like having a local show you around. Go where tour buses can't. Best of all, the adventure happens at

your pace. Stop for photos, take detours, grab a coffee, break for lunch, or blaze your own trail and explore the city streets, neighborhoods and parks on your own. Enjoy a half-day biking tour of Miami Beach's Art Deco Historic District, with **South Beach Bike Tours** you will see first hand, incredible architecture, famous movie locations, celebrity homes and fabulous hotels, the bikes, safety helmets and refreshments are all provided. Experience the excitement of the only Zodiac RIB ride (the same boats used by the FBI, special military forces, DEA and Coast Guard) in Florida on **Ocean Force Adventure's** 2-hour outdoor adventure sightseeing boat tours as you speed across brilliant blue ocean waters and soak up the sun-drenched Miami skies to explore the glamour, the mystery and the history of Miami Beach and Biscayne Bay.

Venturing Further Afield

Just 40 minutes south of the hustle and bustle of the city, lies the **Redland**. Here, in this agricultural paradise, visitors can spend an entire day sampling fresh-from-the-farm produce, savoring the exotic fruits and vegetables that have become the foundation for "Floribbean" cuisine.

Exploring the back roads by bicycle, in-the-know tourists and locals alike line up at **Burr's Berry Farm** for delicious strawberry shakes or at quaint **Knauss Berry Farm** for their sticky-sweet baked goods, such as cinnamon rolls. All roads lead to **Robert is Here**, a popular pit stop for visitors en route to Everglades National Park, offering exotic tropical fruits along with famous fresh fruit shakes and homemade key lime pies. In season, visitors can harvest their own vegetables at the many U-Pick farms that line Krome Avenue and the surrounding streets. **Schneibly Redland's Winery**, Miami Dade's first wine production facility, sells locally pressed wine made from overripe tropical fruit, grown as part of the family's produce business on 96-acre farm.

Open daily, the **Fruit and Spice Park**, a one-of-a-kind 35-acre tropical botanical garden, has more than 500 varieties of fruit, nut and spice trees. Or, by appointment, one can arrange to visit orchid groves or check out small boutique farms that grow specialties like baby lettuce and cherimoya. At the end of a long day of wandering through bird and butterfly sanctuaries, tropical nurseries and fruit groves, visitors can find respite in charming bed and breakfasts such as the lushly landscaped **Grove Inn Country Guesthouse**.

When stomachs are full, great family-owned attractions that recall simpler times are a marked contrast to the high-tech organized mega theme parks in other parts of the state. **Monkey Jungle**, **Everglades Alligator Farm** with its thrilling airboat rides, and the truly offbeat

Coral Castle -- featured on television's "That's Incredible" as a mysterious marvel of architectural engineering -- each retain the flavor of the old South with quaint hospitality. Also nearby, revitalized downtown **Homestead**, boasts an historic main street loaded with antique shops, restaurants and ArtSouth, a funky colony of artist studios and gallery spaces. Also make sure to take in **Miami Metro Zoo** which is rated one of the top 10 zoos in the U.S., this 300-acre cageless zoo showcases more than 1,300 animals from Asia, Africa, Australia, and North and South America.

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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