Courtesy Design District Miami

DESTINATIONS

The 26 Best Things to Do in Miami

If you plan to hit the town, you'll be out for a while.

BY TERRY WARD AND SARA LISS

December 3, 2021

First things first: You came to Miami for some sun, sand and surf, and you're going to get it—with a side of next-level people-watching, too, of course. And if that's all you want (along with a cold glass of your preferred fruity cocktail or a classic mojito), that's fine, but Miami's beaches and rum drinks are barely the beginning of what the Magic City has to offer. From the highest of high-end designer shops and cutting-edge galleries to all types of walking tours, salsa dancing, food halls, museums, and even animal reserves to captivate any kids in your group, this city is the full, sunny package. Here, our picks for the best things to do in Miami.

Read our complete Miami travel guide here.

This gallery has been updated with new information since its original publish date.

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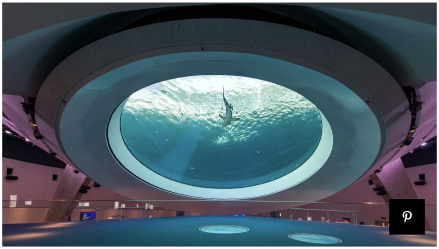

Courtesy Philipp and Patricia Frost Museum of Science

ACTIVITY

Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science →

The Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science is a temple to learning in Downtown Miami's Bayfront Park that's as vast as it is comprehensive. With an aquarium, a planetarium, and two science galleries, this distinguished destination is always busy, but it's big enough to accommodate even the largest rainy-day crowds. Though the exhibitions are just as interesting to adults as they are to kids, the Frost Museum is definitely a family-friendly place. Don't miss a trip up the elevator to the sixth floor's rooftop terrace for sprawling views of downtown Miami.

Jason Lopez

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Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden →

Spanning nearly 84 acres, the Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden is filled with tropical plants, flowers, and trees, including extremely rare species like the petticoat palm. Every square inch of the facility has been thoughtfully designed and constructed, making it easy to navigate. The best way to see a little of everything, though, is by hopping aboard one of the 30-minute tram tours, which run year-round, twice an hour. Don't miss the Wings of the Tropics exhibition, where 40 species of butterflies engage in a colorful display of acrobatics all around you.

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Wynwood Walls →

Known as Miami's most Instagrammed place, this outdoor "gallery" of artwork by graffiti artists and muralists that spreads across warehouses and shop exteriors is a nice foil to Miami's museums. And it can be a quick stop. It'll only take about twenty minutes to hit all the art at Wynwood Walls, including murals by Shepard Fairey (the artist who designed Obama's "Hope" poster). It's a relatively small outdoor space so it's easy to navigate, and there are plenty of benches or rocks to sit on and take it all in. The Walls recently instituted a ticket policy whereby Adult admission is $10, students are $5 and children under 12 are free.

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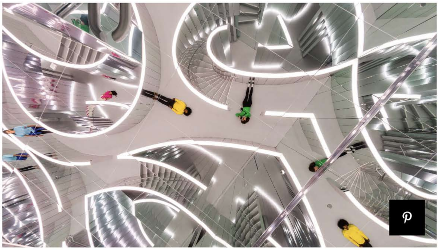
Miami Design Preservation League: Art Deco Walking Tour →

Located on the beach on Ocean Drive, right in the heart of South Beach's Art Deco District, the Art Deco Museum and Welcome Center is where architecture enthusiasts can pop in and learn more about the iconic, colorful buildings that give this neighborhood its personality. While just looking up and admiring the glamorous geometric details and chrome accents is enough for some people, the Miami Design Preservation League offers daily 1.5 hour walking tours of the neighborhood that can be pre-booked online. Tour guides are passionate about their field, and aren't shy about putting visitors through an advanced crash course in not only Art Deco history but the area's Mediterranean Revival and Miami Modern nuances, too.



AMOarts

Allapattah

Known as one of the most culturally diverse neighborhoods in a city brimming with them, the barrio called Allapattah, just west of Wynwood, keeps adding artsy attractions to its ever-growing lineup of thrift shops, hipster bars and Latin restaurants (including Dominican and Honduran eateries and a fab Mexican taqueria). The famed Rubell Museum—six former industrial buildings that hold a collection of world-class contemporary works by the likes of Keith Haring, Jeff Koons, Cindy Sherman and many celebrated newcomers, too—is Allapattah's heaviest cultural hitter. And right across from the Rubell Museum, a new (Spring 2021) walk-through art experience called Superblue immerses visitors in exhibitions through music and visuals in a way you'll have to force yourself not to Instagram or Tik-Tok at every turn.

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South Beach →

South Beach, the quintessential Miami experience, is a public beach that's free and open to everyone. It's also easily accessible by foot, though the most scenic part is the southernmost section, via Lummus Park, which runs along Ocean Drive from 5th to 15th streets. Because it's been used as a backdrop for just about every movie and TV show set in Miami, you'll feel that everything on South Beach looks familiar, including the kiosks where you can rent lounge chairs and umbrellas. Even if you're not big on sitting in the sun, it's worth taking a stroll up or down the beach to see what all the fuss is about. If you wait until the late afternoon (around 4 p.m.) the crowds will have thinned out a bit.

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Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Miami →

Called ICA for short, this is another pillar of the Miami art scene, located in the Miami Design District. The building has a bold and eye-catching metallic facade and was designed by Spanish architect firm Aranguren + Gallegos Arquitectos. Permanent and temporary exhibits with a focus on emerging and local artists; for Miami, this means many Cuban-born and Latin American artists. You don't need hours at this museum, like is the case at others in town, so for people who just want to dabble in Miami's arty side during a vacation, it makes a perfect stop. Interiors are as modern as exterior with brightly lit open spaces. The permanent collections has works by Pablo Picasso, Yves Klein, and Roy Lichtenstein, among others.

Courtesy Faena

ACTIVITY

Faena Theater →

An opulent cabaret-style theater inspired by Europe's grand opera houses that harkens to a bygone area, Faena manages to feel totally decadent, sumptuous, and Miami. The theater's original live production is a cabaret-style spectacle called Tryst—a Lovers' Rendezvous that is perfect for the red velvet surrounds and has elements of the circus (more like cirque) and burlesque. Big names have performed intimate shows here, too, including Bon Jovi, Macy Gray, Miike Snow, Grace Potter, Andra Day and many others. There are only 150 seats in the audience, and there's also regular jazz programming.

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Therapy-IV Deep Sea Fishing →

Sure, the water in Miami is pretty to gaze at from your lounge chair. But give yourself a real experience and hop aboard Captain Stan Saffan's 58-foot sportfish boat, with his crew for a day (or half-day) of deep-sea fishing. It's not just any old tourist who decides that spending a day at sea fishing for marlin, sailfish, or hammerhead sharks qualifies as a good time. So if you're paired with a couple of strangers, it's safe to assume you'll have at least a love of the ocean in common.

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