

An aerial photograph of a Miami coastline. The ocean is on the left, with waves breaking onto a wide, sandy beach. A row of palm trees runs parallel to the beach, separating it from a road and several large, modern multi-story buildings. In the background, the city skyline is visible under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

Meet me in Miami

By Angela Casaway-Carlson

While most tourists flock directly to showy South Beach, locals know the real action is on the mainland. Over the last few years, Miami has quickly mutated into a mecca of world-class art, high-end fashion, chef-driven restaurants, and luxury hotels. Here's a local's guide to experiencing the sunny city by neighborhood — plus, why February is the best time to be there. (Hint: it involves brunch with Southern darling Trisha Yearwood.)

PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES



A view of the Butterfly Pavilion at the Phipps Plaza in Miami.

BRICKELL/DOWNTOWN MIAMI

In case the endless number of cranes that dot the downtown horizon doesn't give it away, the heart of Miami is growing at lightning speed, and there's no such "wow" for the same family.

MUST SEE/DO Get the kids... one of the latest downtown attractions is the Phipps and Patricia Frost Museum of Science, which houses a 3-D planetarium, an aquarium with touch tanks, and an impressive 35-foot-wide water tank that offers a view of sharks circling overhead. More new digs in Frost Art Museum Miami (FAMM), a contemporary art museum with a glass facade on the water, where you'll browse current exhibitions and then hang on their outdoor swings or gaze at the towering hanging gardens and sparkling fountains. frostmiami.org

If shopping and pampering is your vacation style, spend a few hours at the new Brickell City Centre, a nexus of luxury shops (many that are new to the U.S.), restaurants, and a five-to-seven theater district perfect for those days you need to escape the Miami heat. For ultimate shopping, check in for a spa day at the Breeze Mandarin Oriental Miami on secluded Brickell Key for a new of Asian-inspired serenity. brickellcitycenter.com, mandarinoriental.com



A night view of Brickell City Centre in Miami, Florida, with its modern architecture and waterfront views.

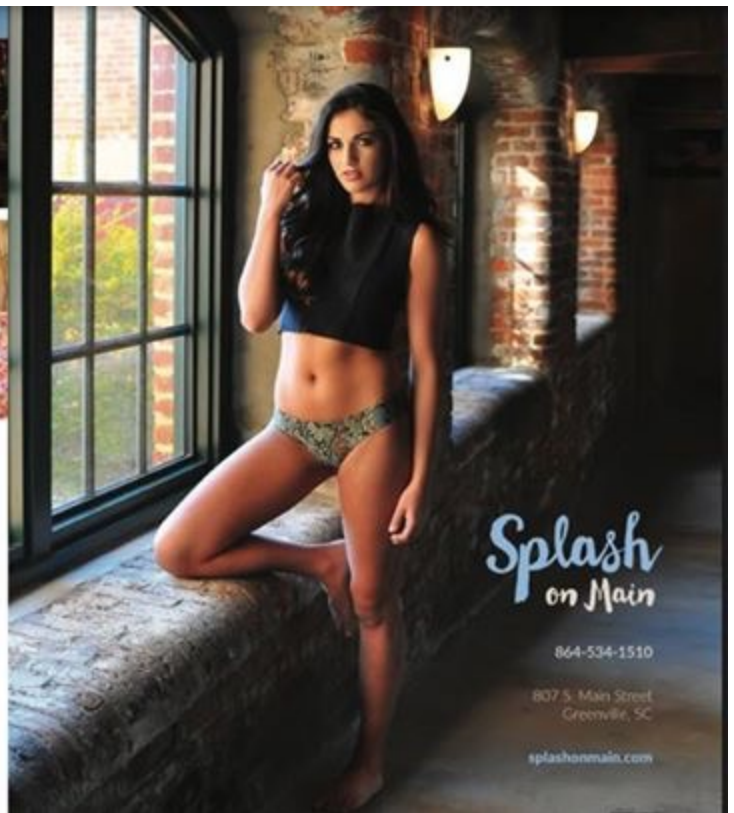
A view of the Brickell City Centre at night, showing its modern architecture and waterfront views.

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MUST EAT/DRINK The South Seas restaurant in Brickell is known for its authentic Thai food, offering a variety of dishes that are both delicious and healthy. For a more casual dining experience, try the new Brickell City Centre, which features a variety of restaurants and bars. For a more upscale dining experience, try the new Brickell City Centre, which features a variety of restaurants and bars.



For a true "Isle in Miami" experience, make a reservation at El Yacht Nightclub and Cabaret for an energetic dinner-and-a-show with a side of top-notch entertainment, a live Latin band that will transport you to Cuba, and over a conversation. (It's not just in Miami.) End the night with cocktails at Sugar, the rooftop bar and garden perched on the 40th floor of the EAST Miami, where you'll be rewarded with panoramic city views and an energetic scene. mandarinoriental.com, elcabanomiami.com



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