

COUNTRY LIFE INTERNATIONAL

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Miami: sleek and chic

No longer just a playground for the super-rich, Miami has finally grown into a mature city with first-class cultural credentials, says Holly Kirkwood

Map by Juliet Percival

FOR a city barely a century old, Miami pulls its weight on the world stage. Standing at the crossroads of North and South America, Europe and the Caribbean, this colourful conurbation has a rich history fused from the varying cultures that have left their mark over the decades. But, today, it's become the destination for those who want a sophisticated city with sunshine. Over the past 10 years, the city has firmly set itself the goal of becoming the winter honeypot for the world's rich young things. World-class hotels, restaurants, and designer shops bring glamorous jetsetters

from all over the world, but it's the culture the grown-ups stay for.

The city peaked and troughed in prominence throughout the past century: 1920s New Yorkers appreciated its liberal attitude to Prohibition, the Rat Pack passed through in the 1950s and it's still the playground of choice for pop stars with more money than sense, but, recently, it has also established itself as a leading magnet for those interested in fine art. 'Wealthy collectors may initially be drawn by Art Basel, but once they're here, they tend to be impressed by the quality of life,' says Gabriella Navarro from Fort Capital

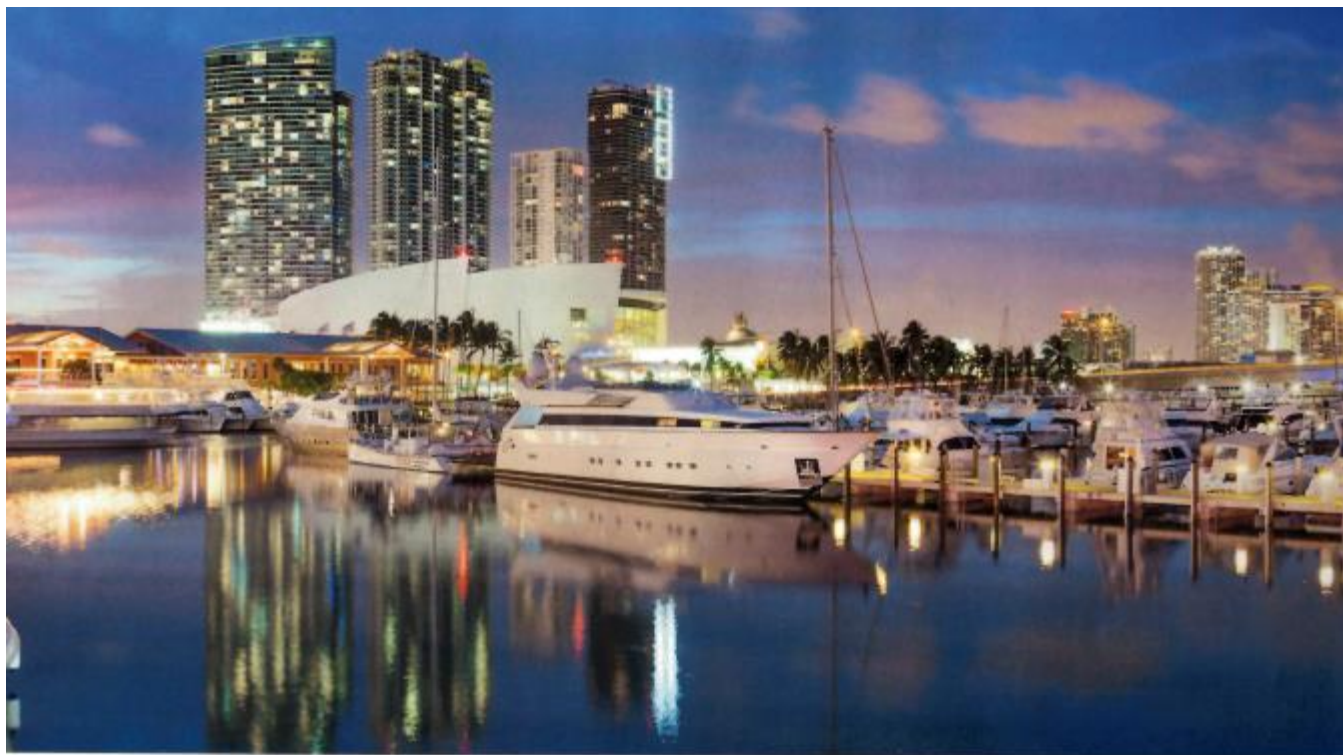
Downtown Miami is now home to the Design District as wealthy collectors have flocked to the resurgent city

Management (<http://fortcapital.com>).

Art Basel, the contemporary art show that launched in Miami Beach in 2002, has been such a success that a whole area of downtown is has been renamed the Design District. This in turn has created an art focus around nearby Wynwood, which has become gentrified, much like London's Shoreditch. And the rest of the city continues to develop: the world-class Pérez Art Museum opened in December and Miami World Center—a brand-new 30-acre shopping and cultural space—is under construction.

Architects also love Miami: Zaha Hadid has designed her first residential tower in the Western Hemisphere there and Richard Meier, Frank Gehry and Norman Foster have all put their names to buildings in recent years.

Overseas investment is on the up: more than \$14 billion (£8.4 billion) deposited in south Florida banks in 2011 came from offshore sources, including Brazil and France, and the city continues to consolidate its reputation as an international banking hub.



Miami property prices took a steep dip in 2007 and 2008 and many experts agree they are now highly undervalued—an exceptional situation considering Miami made the Christie's International Real Estate Index of top 10 cities in 2013. 'When you compare the prices here with the other top 10 cities in that document, such as New York and London, it's a real eye-opener for people,' points out Ron Shuffield from EWM Realtors (00 1 305 674 4000; www.ewm.com).

Prices for prime projects start at \$650 (£388) per sq ft, although in some of the new top-notch projects, buyers pay more than \$2,500 (£1,495) per sq ft. Apartments (which make up the majority of properties in the city) are selling fast and not just to investors looking for a profit. 'Back in 2007, buyers were putting down a 3% deposit on a project—not enough to miss—and lots of projects were put on hold,' relates local agent, Savills partner and expatriate Briton Kelly Charles (020-7016 3740; www.savills.co.uk). 'Now, buyers have to put in up to 50% of their own money

in the early stages and many are paying cash.'

Much like in London, it's overwhelmingly the international buyer making the running. 'Buyers come from Canada, Brazil, Venezuela and the eastern seaboard in the USA as ever, but we're seeing increasing interest from Europe, including France, the UK, Russia and Germany,' adds Paulie Hankin from Cervera Real Estate (00 1 786 385 4450; paulierealtor@gmail.com).

A city that has been characterised by great highs and lows, Miami never suffers for long. In the last property slump, it was the first to feel the pain, but it was also the first to recover. 'Miami will always bounce back, no matter what happens,' believes Claudine Letz, a French national who has lived there for 20 years and works with UK agent Winkworth. 'We have the beach, we have the people and the culture; we have the restaurants and the galleries and we have the sunshine; people are always going to want to come here.'

THE MIAMI SEASON

January

Art Deco Weekend sees a festival of events to celebrate the Art Deco heritage of the city with tours, talks and parties (www.mdpl.org)

February

The Miami International Boat Show is based at the convention centre and the main marinas. The Sunset Celebration is always a spectacle

March

BritWeek has now come to Miami and spotlights British innovation, technology, education, creativity, international trade and culture (www.britweek.org/britweek-visits-miami)

August

Lots of restaurants offer discounts during **Miami Spice**, which takes place

in a quiet time in the season, so look out for special deals at names such as Nobu and Zuma (August 1–September 30, 2014, www.ilovemiamispice.com)

October

The Columbus Day Regatta sees 200 sailboats race on Biscayne Bay, off Coconut Grove (October 10–12, 2014, <http://columbusdayregatta.net>)

December

Art Basel Miami Beach, Design Miami and **Art Miami** take over the city during the first weekend of December, when the town explodes with an army of journalists, designers, artists and architects (December 4–7, 2014, www.artbasel.com)

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FOR SALE **Starchitect Power:**
\$49m+ **1000 Museum ->**

A work of art as well as a substantial new landmark located downtown, no two properties will be the same in 1000 Museum, designed by Zaha Hadid. Putting the skeleton on the outside of the building allows for some innovative spaces inside and Dame Zaha's team is also designing the interiors. With just 83 properties, the smallest of which is 4,500sq ft, there are 73 floorplans and lots of space for amenities, including parking and the pool, gym and spa on the 10th floor. For fans of the architect, this is something exceptional and the sales team is already seeing huge interest from collectors of her work.

Prices start at \$4.9 million (£2.9m) and rise to \$45 million (£26.87m) for a penthouse through Savills (020-7016 3741; www.savills.com)



FOR SALE **Downtown chic: The Bond ->**
\$300k+

The Bond will be a new tower in the buzzing Brickell district that aims to 'combine British elegance with Brickell chic'. There will be 323 residences over 44 floors, ranging from studio apartments to penthouses. Pools, cabanas, and outdoor kitchens are all planned.

Prices range from \$300,000 to \$1.25 million (£179,000-£746,500) (020-7016 4734; www.savills.com)



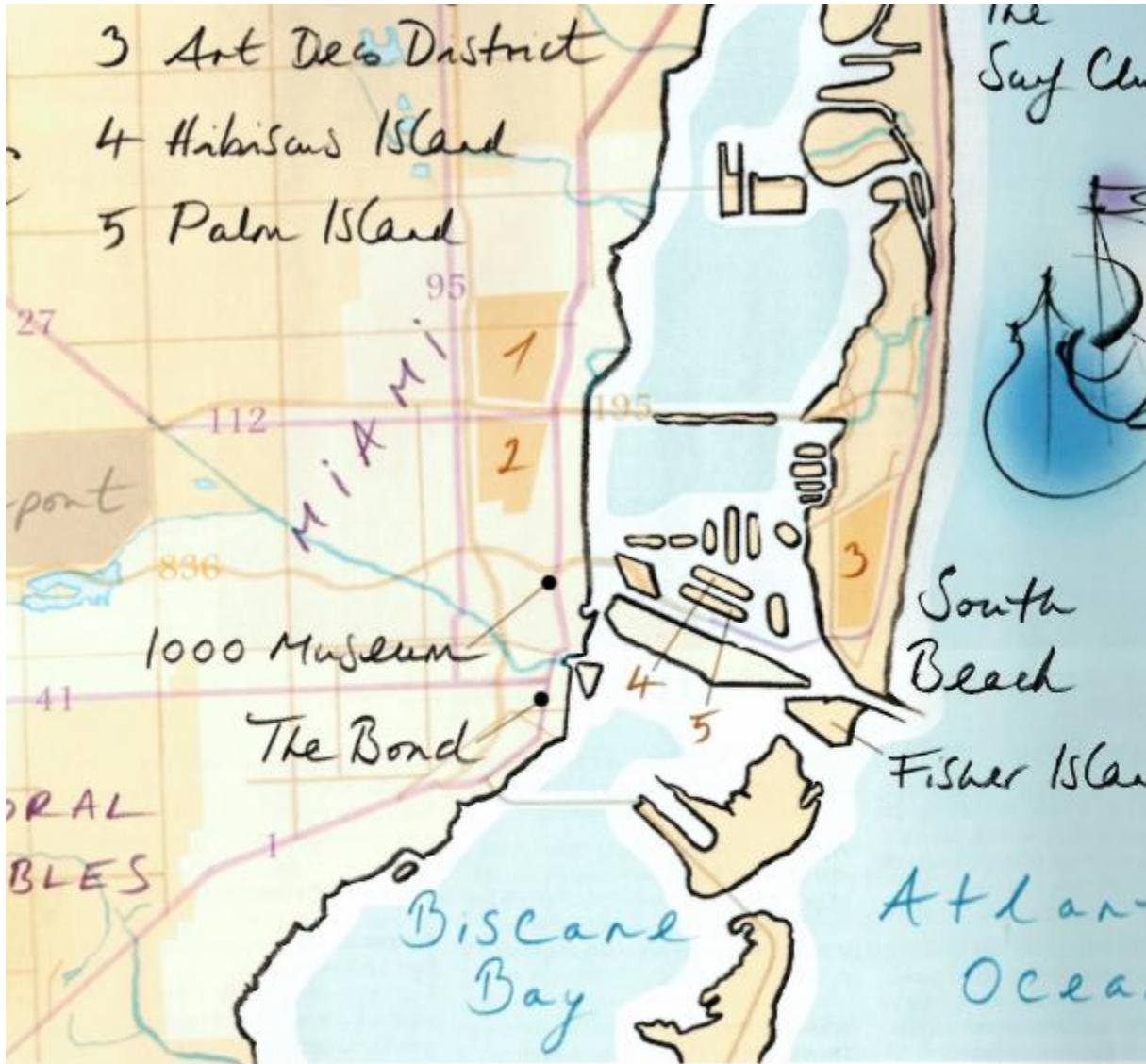
FOR SALE **Private island paradise: Fisher Island Club** ↑
\$8m+

The Vanderbilts turned the 216-acre Fisher Island into a private family retreat and it still oozes old-world charm; in 2010, it had the highest per capita income in the USA. The only way onto the island is by ferry and the owners run the island hotel and private club. Amenities include a very smart beach club and there are two marinas. There are also tennis courts, a golf course, a fitness centre and restaurants. Most properties are apartments, but Palm Island and Hibiscus Island have gated estates in which houses on the water will cost upwards of \$8 million (£4.78m).

Available through Claudine Letz, Winkworth International's partner (020-7870 7181; www.winkworth.co.uk/international)



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FOR SALE
\$1m+

← Hotel condo: 1
Hotel & Homes
South Beach

The 1 is a new brand from the people behind the W hotel group and the St Regis along the lines of a 'condo-hotel'. This project will allow buyers who choose the hotel apartments to rent by the day or the week, thereby accessing the holiday lettings market. Prices start at \$1 million (£597,000) and rise to more than \$6 million (£3.58m) for the penthouses—all available through Savills (020-7016 3741; www.savills.com)

FOR SALE
\$3m+

1930s glamour: The
Surf Club →

The Surf Club is an exclusive private members' club just south of classy Bal Harbour. It's being revamped and Richard Meier has designed 150 elegant apartments. With a Four Seasons boutique hotel servicing residents and owners and a staggeringly long strip of beach for Miami, this is pretty special. The floor-to-ceiling glass residences will range from 1,200sq ft to 8,000sq ft. From \$3 million (£1.79m) (00 1 305 330 4000; <http://thesurfclub.com>)



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FOR SALE
\$300k+

Period appeal:
Art Deco

Miami is justly proud of its Art Deco district. Most of the houses have been converted into apartments on tree-lined avenues within walking distance of the beach. A one-bedroom apartment costs from \$300,000 (£179,000) — they're smaller than new-builds, but have enduring appeal.

Claudine Letz, Winkworth International's partner (020-7870 7181; www.winkworth.co.uk/international)

NEED TO KNOW

Where to eat

Joe's Stone Crab The no bookings policy here means a wait of more than an hour for everyone unless you're Beyoncé, but it's worth it for the seafood at this 100-year-old South Beach institution (www.joesstonecrab.com)

Juvia Located on the penthouse level of the Herzog & de Meuron-designed parking garage on Lincoln Road, this restaurant combines killer views with hip cocktails, fusion food and a glamorous crowd (www.juviainmiami.com)

Casa Tua A neighbourhood Italian and Miami Beach classic, Casa Tua is a classy spot that's also a private club with a handful of rooms to rent (www.casatualifestyle.com/miami/)

Where to shop

Lincoln Road Mall is the high-street shopping experience to which the tourists flock—it has brands such as Lacoste and H&M and is a teenager's paradise

Bal Harbour Shops is an upscale mall and has valet parking and every designer name you could wish for, from Prada to Ralph

Lauren via Bulgari. There are two excellent restaurants full of well-manicured residents having a post-retail-therapy gossip

Wynwood, just north of downtown, is the arty district. It's filled with galleries and artist's studios and every second Saturday of the month, an art walk sees a hip crowd touring the galleries in the evening fuelled by drinks and nibbles

Where to stay

Delano Fans of Art Deco really ought to stay at the Delano. One of the original hotels on the beach built in the 1940s, a recent revamp saw it take a modern twist on the classic style. The pool area is one of the most stylish in town (www.morganshotelgroup.com/delano/delano-south-beach)

The Setai Bringing a bit of Balinese glamour to Miami, The Setai is a super-cool destination hotel. Service is excellent and the outdoor spaces are beautifully done, providing a choice of pools if you can't face the beach (www.thesetaihotel.com)

OneBalHarbour Its location away from the

crowds in Bal Harbour means this hotel benefits from sitting on a peaceful slice of beach. The food is good and rooms are very comfortable, featuring freestanding baths (www.onebalharbourresort.com)

Further afield

Fort Lauderdale

Traditionally a peaceful retreat for the super-wealthy, it seems Fort Lauderdale is quietly gaining younger fans. Direct flights from London Gatwick to Fort Lauderdale International will also appeal to those who want to avoid travelling through Miami International — which, alas, shows no sign of improving. With the majority of entertainment to be found along the famous Las Olas Boulevard, the action offstage takes place at enormous mansions located along its pretty waterways. News comes in the form of the first new apartment block to be built on the beach. Paramount Fort Lauderdale Beach will have just 95 residences of two to four bedrooms in 18 storeys and penthouses starting at \$1 million (£597,000), with a concierge and beach club, available through Savills (020-7016 3741; www.savills.com).