

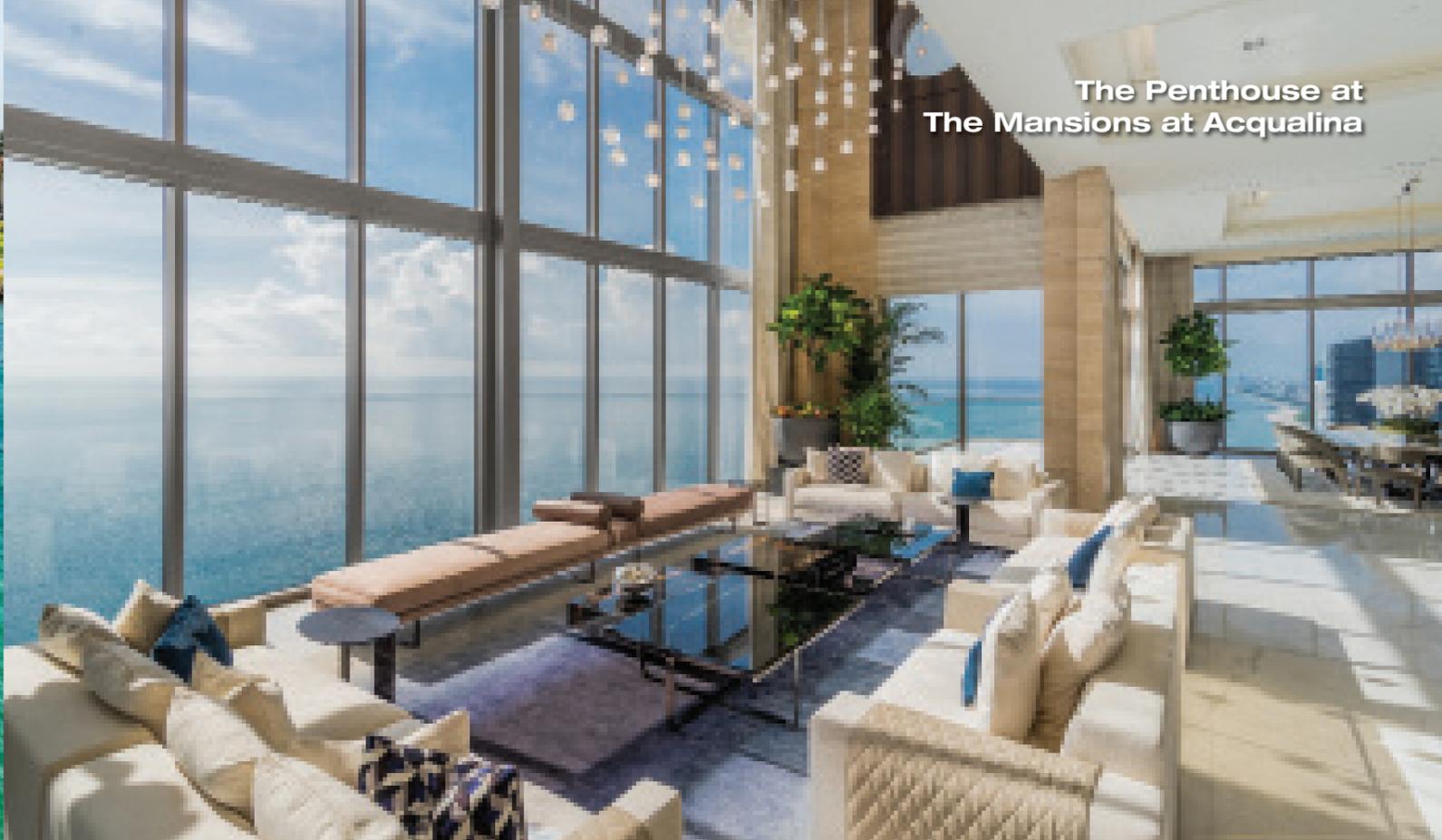


Surf, Sand & Sophistication

By Roger Grody

An endless coastline, rich heritage and spirit of imagination converge in Florida to create the ultimate luxury lifestyle.

Fisher Island Club



The Penthouse at The Mansions at Acqualina

Florida is a kaleidoscope of iconic images, from signature white-sand beaches and championship golf to Miami's seductive skyline or theme parks encompassing much more than simply a Magic Kingdom. The entire world convenes on this alluring peninsula for every imaginable recreational experience, and its elite residents enjoy unparalleled luxury.

Florida cannot be defined by a single place or attitude, as its communities represent an incredible spectrum of physical and cultural diversity. Some feel a bit like Savannah or Biloxi, others more spiritually akin to Havana, San Juan or Brooklyn with traditions, music and aromas to match the accents. The fourth-generation Pensacola fisherman and the South Beach fashion designer who recently emigrated from Brazil contribute equally to the state's personality.

Beachfront

With its 1,350 miles of coastline, luxury residential and hospitality developers find Florida irresistible. South Florida, where the Atlantic coast is almost continuously developed from Miami to Palm Beach, receives the most attention, but beautiful beaches are also found in less congested areas.

Ideal for catching rays are Clearwater Beach outside Tampa and Atlantic Beach near Jacksonville, both offering wide expanses

of white sand. The Space Coast's Cocoa Beach is favored by surfers, while the dune-swept beaches of Amelia Island attract bird-watchers. The Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island is preferred by amateur ornithologists seeking maximum comfort.

Florida's Panhandle, whose oceanfront is

appropriately referred to as the Emerald Coast, features uncrowded beaches with sugar-white sand. "Distinctly more Southern than South Beach, the area is a throwback to the uncluttered and carefree beach lifestyle of years past," reports David Merryman, manager of a premier boutique hotel called The Pearl, whose

PHOTO COURTESY FISHER ISLAND CLUB

PHOTO BY VENILHANNI REYES

Rosemary Beach locale is reminiscent of New Orleans' French Quarter.

Tee Time

It is impossible to overstate the significance of golf to Floridian culture and economics. The game is almost a religion here, despite

competition from major league and high-profile university teams, not to mention watersports. Golf generates \$11 billion annually to Florida's economy, a figure surpassing the state's portfolio of theme parks. With approximately 1,250 courses, Florida offers more opportunities for duffers than any other state, while touring

professionals are attracted to the climate, amenities and absence of state income tax.

Based in Palm Beach Gardens, PGA legend Jack Nicklaus is nearly as dominant in golf course design and development as he was on the links at the height of his career. The Golden Bear has designed courses throughout Florida, including King & Bear in St. Augustine, a collaboration with the late Arnold Palmer. The Bear's Club in Jupiter features a 40,000-square-foot Tuscan-style clubhouse and \$10 million estates line its fairways. In Naples, Nicklaus rival Greg Norman authored two courses at Tiburón Golf Club, paired with a Ritz-Carlton hotel.

Luxury homeowners on the barrier islands — they trace Florida's Atlantic Coast like a string of pearls — enjoy access to both championship golf and the water. Because it occupies a small island, the homes surrounding South Florida's Indian Creek Country Club are both waterfront and golf course-adjacent, resulting in prices pushing \$30 million. Less pricey is the real estate bordering Juno Beach's Seminole Golf Club, but its membership is so exclusive it reportedly once turned down Nicklaus himself.

State of Design

While influences are imported from other regions, Florida has developed its own signature style, most conspicuous in its architecture.

FLORIDA LUXURY EXPERTS



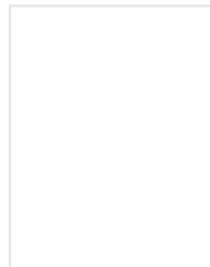
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PHOTO BY BILL SUMNER

Vizcaya Museum & Gardens on Biscayne Bay

The charismatic skyline of Miami first gained attention during the opening credits of the iconic 1980s series Miami Vice, and things have only accelerated since.

With flashy postmodern buildings and pastel-hued Art Deco jewels, Miami makes other American cities look gray and unimaginative. Celebrity architects from around the world — Norman Foster, Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid, to name a few — have contributed to the metro area’s skyline, which some experts consider the greatest design laboratory in the world.

Much of Miami’s world-class architecture is driven by a competitive luxury real estate market in which developers use design to sell condos at a premium. In addition to those “starchitects,” residential towers are emblazoned with luxury brands — Aston Martin and Porsche from the automotive world, Armani and Fendi from the

fashion world — to increase cachet value. Then-chairman/CEO Pietro Beccari stated at the project launch, “It fully expresses the codes, history and savoir faire that characterize Fendi.”

Further honoring that creative spirit is the 18-block Miami Design District that combines luxury home furnishings (e.g. Bulthaup, Poltrona Frau) with legendary fashion labels Cartier, Versace and Hermès, as well as chic restaurants and the Institute of Contemporary Art’s sleek new digs. The Gulf Coast city of St. Petersburg has created multiple districts to promote local artists and artisans.

Extended Stay

Demand for luxury accommodations has fueled massive investments by premier hospitality brands, including a dozen-plus Ritz-Carlton properties throughout Florida. The Fontainebleau,

an iconic landmark in Miami Beach since its debut in 1954 — has been reimagined as a trendy, Vegas-style property for a new generation. More laid-back is Little Palm Island Resort & Spa on Little Torch Key, which will soon reopen after Hurricane Irma shuttered it for two-and-a-half years. Pat Colee, founding owner of Noble House Hotels & Resorts, states, “This restoration has been a true labor of love and we believe we’ve maintained the authentic character of Little Palm while ushering in added amenities.”

Historic and stately are The Breakers in Palm Beach, a perennial high society retreat, and Miami’s Fisher Island Club Hotel & Resort, a former Vanderbilt estate located in America’s wealthiest ZIP code, a seven-minute ferry ride from the mainland. CEO Bernard Lackner says of the intimate hotel with private club privileges,

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BAZZAAR PHOTO © 2013 RYAN FORBES / AMABLU; INSET PHOTO COURTESY JOSE ANDRES

The Bazaar on South Beach with José Andrés inset

“One of the few true private island sanctuaries, Fisher Island offers a lifestyle rich in leisure and recreational activities, yet just minutes from Miami’s world-class commercial, cultural and culinary offerings.”

In Florida, luxury hospitality companies have experimented with their branding of condominiums, an increasingly popular trend. Fort Lauderdale, once famous for spring break, is the site of a glitzy Four Seasons Private Residences where a 3,965-square-foot unit commands \$8.9 million. “Four Seasons Fort Lauderdale has captivated buyers with its beautiful, high-class design and comprehensive lifestyle experience in the yachting capital of the world,” states Nadim Ashi, founder of project developer Fort Partners.

The Acqualina Resort & Spa in Sunny Isles Beach, one of Greater Miami’s most exclusive hotels, offers luxury residences at the Mansions at Acqualina. A \$38 million penthouse in that tower includes both a Rolls-Royce and Lamborghini.

Arts & Culture

Most surf-and-sun destinations lack robust art scenes, but Florida’s cultural calendar attracts talent from around the globe. Even laid-back locales offer engaging opportunities such as Coral Springs Museum of Art near Pompano Beach, Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg and the Ernest Hemingway House in Key West. “Culture Builds Florida” is a statewide arts campaign designed to promote these assets.

Art Basel is one of the world’s most prestigious art shows (and celebrity scenes), earning Miami the international stature usually

reserved for much larger cities. Year-round, Miami offers the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) and the stunning Vizcaya Museum & Gardens on Biscayne Bay while performing arts enthusiasts gather at the César Pelli-designed Adrienne Arsht Center or Gehry-designed New World Center.

Tampa’s Straz Center — it is the largest performing arts venue in the state — has been a catalyst for downtown development. “The slogan ‘Culture Builds Florida’ is true and true for us in the Tampa Bay area as well,” reports Judith Lisi, president & CEO of the Straz Center. “The arts renaissance throughout Florida reflects a statewide sense of wanting more authentic, more alive experiences in local communities,” she says.

Culinary Clout

With multiple cultures converging in a resort setting, it should be no surprise that the state’s culinary scene is diverse and imaginative. Pioneering chef/activist José Andrés draws inspiration from many sources at The Bazaar South Beach, incorporating foie gras into an elegant riff on Cuban coffee or winking at the Big Apple with a sophisticated, artfully presented interpretation of bagels-and-lox.

“Another day, another country,” is how Anthony Bourdain once described Miami, citing flavors from Africa, across the Caribbean and throughout Latin America. Florida is a Southern state, so a satisfying bowl of shrimp-and-grits is never far away, and regardless of cuisine, chefs proudly showcase the bounty of Florida’s farmers, ranchers and fishermen.

The food hall craze has arrived in Florida,

with Heights Public Market occupying a former streetcar facility in Tampa and the 50,000-square-foot Central Fare part of a six-block development in Miami incorporating a hub for high-speed Virgin Trains. Those trains are intended to make it easier for Floridians to traverse their state, akin to Europeans whisking through the French countryside on the high-speed TGV. In Orlando, a future Virgin destination, dining options include Bull & Bear, an elegant steakhouse at the Waldorf Astoria, and acclaimed Luma on Park.

Celebrity chefs like Daniel Boulud, Jean-Georges Vongerichten and Michael Mina are flocking to Florida. Joining them is New York’s Michelin-starred John Fraser, who is bringing The Loyal, his American brasserie concept, to an ambitious new development in Miami. “Esplanade at Aventura felt like the perfect fit because they’re creating an approachable upscale culinary experience that not only captures the essence of what I try to do, but also allows me to present my craft to an entirely new audience,” reports Fraser.

The Aventura Mall was already one of the premier shopping/dining destinations in Miami, and the adjoining Esplanade demonstrates the confidence its developer, Seritage Growth Properties, has in the local economy. “Esplanade’s exciting and diverse offerings will truly resonate with both the local population and the large number of international visitors in this market,” says Meghan Kruger, senior vice president of leasing for Seritage.

Open for Business

Florida is big business, and if the Sunshine State was a nation, its \$1 trillion gross domestic product (GDP) would be eclipsed by only 16 countries. Tourism has an annual economic impact of more than \$85 billion, but the Florida economy is much more diverse than manicured fairways, white-sand beaches and theme parks.

Aerospace, which arrived with the Space Program, continues to be an economic engine, with aircraft and related parts now being the state’s number one export. With long growing seasons, agriculture contributes even more to the state’s economy than tourism, and it is not just citrus (in fact, Florida’s most exported commodity is meats). Greater Orlando’s economy is no longer dominated by Mickey and Minnie, and its burgeoning technology community contributes \$12.5 billion per year to its economy.

Another accelerating business sector statewide is health science, best represented by the world-class Scripps Research Institute in Palm Beach County. Florida’s growing economic influence naturally translates into greater demand for luxury amenities and residences. **U.S.**