

2015 Miami

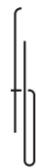
MEETING & INCENTIVE TRAVEL GUIDE



Credit: Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau



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Meetings Crossroads of the World

By John Buchanan

For more than a century, Miami has been an internationally recognized and universally celebrated tourism brand, drawing well-heeled vacationers from around the globe. Since the 1990s, when South Beach exploded on the scene as a favored destination for movie stars and models, Miami has steadily evolved to win recognition as one of the most coveted meeting destinations in the country.

And today, it's hotter and more distinctive than ever.

"The number-one thing my clients and I like about Miami is that its location makes it a crossroads of the world, especially from Latin America and Europe," says Jaime Alvarez, president of Miami-based global meeting and event planning firm World Dimension. "The other factor that makes Miami so popular today is that the city has greatly improved its infrastructure over the last 10 years. And all of that work that has been done over the last decade is really what makes Miami stand out today as a top meeting destination."

Yet another factor that gives Miami a distinct advantage is the often surprising value it delivers for much of the year. "We have an extended low season," Alvarez says. "Our high season is really just January through April, so from May until November we have the opportunity to be able to work really well with clients when it comes to their budgets. And that means that for most of the year, Miami can really deliver a lot of bang for the dollar."

Alvarez and his clients also like the fact that Miami features astonishing cultural diversity.

"We now have people from all over the world living here, so that gives the city a unique flavor," he says. "It's now a melting pot, just like New York."

And one of the shared reasons people are there is



Sunset paddleboarding off South Beach.

the almost perfect year-round climate, especially in late spring and fall.

Victoria Ascione, CMP, CMM, director, corporate meetings at Bacardi USA in Miami, agrees that the city's warm and sunny weather is a major factor in its success as a meeting destination.

"When a planner considers Miami as a meeting and in-

"Miami continues to change and get better every day. And that is really what makes it so exciting...for meeting planners."



Barry Moskowitz, Vice President, Convention Sales Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau

centive destination, it's definitely all about the weather," she says. "A year-round tropical climate is the foundation. Then add to that our beautiful beaches and natural resources, international airport and cruise port, world-class hotels and restaurants, recreational activities, sizzling nightlife and cultural diversity, and you have the key elements to create an engaging and memorable meeting or incentive."

She adds, "It continues to grow as a vibrant city of cultural diversity that truly offers something special for everyone. There has been a renaissance of sorts as individual neighborhoods and community events have become recognized and appreciated for their unique contributions."

And this cultural authenticity facilitates the creation of truly distinctive events. Ascione says, "On one level, it's a combination of a tropical paradise and glitz and glamour. It offers the best of both those worlds, and everything in between. In terms of options and inspirations, it offers planners a bountiful palette to work with and the opportunity to creatively design a program that incorporates the sights, sounds and tastes of a truly great destination."

A Vision and Master Plan

It's no accident that over the past five years, Miami has positioned itself as one of the most popular meeting des-

Miami on the Move

tinations in the country, says Barry Moskowitz, vice president of convention sales at the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMCVB).

While many other destinations recovered slowly and acted cautiously after the Great Recession, Miami boldly planned the aggressive development of new meeting infrastructure and a dynamic marketing plan. "Once the economy started to recover, we were the first (destination) out on the playing field again, and we've been non-stop ever since in promoting Miami as a meeting and convention destination," Moskowitz says. "And these last few years have been a phenomenal run. Even today, my head continues to spin with all of the continuing development we have going on. As a destination, Miami continues to change and get better every day. And that is really what makes it so exciting, not just for us, but also for meeting planners."

The next major benchmark in the evolution of Miami as a world-class meeting and convention destination will be a \$500 million expansion and renovation of the **Miami Beach Convention Center**. Work will begin in January, according to Moskowitz, and be completed in 2018.

"The entire facility is going to go through a major transformation," Moskowitz says. "And when it's all done, it will be one of the most state-of-the-art convention centers in the country."

The 1.4-million-sf facility will include a 60,000-sf mul-



Rendering of the Marriott Marquis Miami Worldcenter Hotel & Expo Center.

Credit: Design by Nicholas Brosh, Worst Walle & Associates, Inc.

tipurpose, master ballroom and a 20,000-sf rooftop ballroom. Also, 500,000 sf of exhibit space will be fully renovated and modernized. The number of meeting rooms also will be expanded. Visit mb2017cc.com for updates.

Under development now, says Moskowitz, is the \$1.05 billion, mixed use **Brickell City Centre** project, which will encompass 9.1 acres along South Miami Avenue between Eighth Street and Sixth Street and offer 5.4 million sf of hotel, residential, office, retail and entertainment space.



Ascione

Advice for Planners

Victoria Ascione, CMP, CMM, director, corporate meetings at Bacardi USA in Miami offers a few words of advice for planners who have not yet experienced Miami for meetings:

"Take the time to really learn about the destination before designing your meeting or incentive, so that you can really incorporate the local flavor of the city," she says. "One mark of a true meeting professional is achieving the right balance of the program's strategic goals while providing an authentic experience for attendees by creatively integrating local culture, cuisine and activities into the event. In that sense, there are great resources in Miami, including local industry professionals who live and work here every day and who are happy to share what makes Miami so special. The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau and the South Florida Chapter of Meeting Professionals International are two other valuable resources. Remember that we are a seasonal destination, so do your homework regarding availability and rates. And if you are flexible with dates, you'll have a better opportunity to negotiate a good deal."

Internationally Friendly Airlift

Elevating Miami's status as one of the most easily accessible international cities in the world is the newly expanded and renovated Miami International Airport, which offers the advantage of being located just six miles west of downtown Miami and 10 miles from Miami Beach.

"One of the reasons we like Miami so much and keep coming back is because of the airport," says Rosanne Kennedy, director, office of the CEO, at Danaher Corporation in Washington, DC. Since 2011, Kennedy has been using Miami every other year for one of the company's most important meetings, a global leadership conference for 175 attendees. "We have attendees coming in from all around the world and it is very easy for all of them to get into and out of Miami."

The fact that there is a second major airport located just 45 minutes away in Ft. Lauderdale, Kennedy says, further enhances her options and makes things even more convenient for attendees.

Greater Miami CVB V.P. of Convention Sales Barry Moskowitz adds, "Our sales presentation starts with how easy it is to get to Miami. We've spent billions of dollars on capital improvements to Miami International Airport. It's now one of the most stunning airports in the country. And a world-class airport means we can sell a world-class entryway into the destination. We now have more than 100 air carriers. No other city in the country can top that. You can get here easily from anywhere in the U.S. or anywhere in the world."



The Shoppes at Ocean Drive at Miami International Airport.

Credit: Greater Miami CVB



Renderings of the Miami Beach Convention Center expansion.



Credit: Miami Beach Convention Center

Just north of that project will be yet another major development called **Miami Worldcenter**, which is getting ready to break ground later this year two blocks west of American Airlines Arena. The complex will be anchored by a new, \$750 million 1,800-room **Marriott Marquis Miami Worldcenter Hotel & Expo Center** that will include more than 600,000 sf of convention facilities, including a 100,000-sf ground floor exhibition hall, a 65,000-sf main ballroom, a 1,500-seat theater and 390,000 sf of meeting rooms and event space. Retail shopping options will be highlighted by new Macy's and Bloomingdale's department stores. The hotel, set to open in fall 2018, is now beginning to take meeting bookings for early winter 2019.

Moskowitz sums up Miami's ever-strengthening market position by adding, "In today's meeting market, every world-class destination has to have a world-class airport, world-class hotels, a world-class convention center, world-class offsite venues and a world-class dining scene. And Miami now has all of those things. And we're still working hard every day to make it even better. Then you add in our tropical climate and cosmopolitan setting, which includes one of the most culturally diverse and interesting cities in the world. So when you look at what we offer now, Miami is a one-of-a-kind meeting and convention destination."

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Miami Neighborhoods



The Cuban Museum and antique shop in Coral Gables.

A Diverse Metropolis

Although both Miami and Miami Beach are incorporated cities, the Greater Miami area consists of a variety of interesting municipalities and neighborhoods that, together, create the wonderfully diverse metropolis that the world knows simply as Miami.

Downtown Design District and Wynwood.

Over the last 10 years, downtown Miami, located along the famous Biscayne Bay corridor that has been known around the world since the 1940s, has evolved into a modern, hyperactive, multi-cultural enclave that now features one of the country's top arts-and-culture districts, anchored by the acclaimed Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts and a Design District that is now being called "the Rodeo Drive of South Florida." The brainchild of local developer Craig Robins, one of the pioneers of the South Beach phenomenon on Miami Beach in the 1990s, the walkable and inviting Design District is dedicated to innovative fashion, design, architecture and dining experiences.



The Colony Hotel, a South Beach art deco landmark.

The still-emerging Wynwood district features some of the city's most interesting and edgy art galleries and the Wynwood Walls public art installation, as well as some of Miami's most popular local restaurants.

Coconut Grove. South of downtown Miami, Coconut Grove was established as a renowned and tony brand long before developers started resuscitating the Miami Beach neighborhood that would become South Beach. Once famous as an arts colony, Coconut Grove is now a shopping and dining mecca known for its quaint boutiques, art galleries, restaurants and cafés.

Coral Gables. Southwest of downtown is Coral Gables, the area's oldest and most iconic community, famous

for its lavish Mediterranean Revival mansions and home to the University of Miami. Developed during the 1920s during the Florida land boom that attracted America's wealthiest and most famous vacationers to South Florida, Coral Gables was one of the country's first planned communities and is still highly regarded for its strict zoning regulations. It was designed to be only four blocks wide and just over two miles long, with Ponce de Leon Boulevard bisecting it. Its developers promoted the simple fact that every business in town was within easy walking distance, a trait that makes Coral Gables even more popular in the 21st century. And like Miami's other neighborhoods, Coral Gables offers a range of restaurants, shops and local attractions.

South Beach. Despite the history and longstanding appeal of places such as Coconut Grove or Coral Gables, it was the South Beach neighborhood, located at the southern end of the city of Miami Beach, that gave Miami a fresh start as a tourism destination in the late 1990s. Just 21 blocks long and a few blocks wide — from the Atlantic Ocean to Biscayne Bay — South Beach is home to one of the world's most acclaimed collections of architectural gems in its art deco district, a number of them designed by fabled architect Morris Lapidus.

Along Collins Avenue, Lincoln Road and Ocean Drive, its three main streets, South Beach now features the most famous restaurants, bars, retail shops and nightclubs in all of Miami. As a result, celebrities and titans of industry frequent the destination, which constantly reinforces its reputation as one of the most popular vacation spots on earth. As a result, it is a go-to option for many corporate meetings and incentive programs that want to incorporate some genuine sizzle into their agendas. **MIAMI**

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Miami Hotels



Trump National Doral Miami.



Fontainebleau Miami Beach completed a \$1 billion renovation in 2014.



The Fontainebleau features 107,000 sf of indoor meeting and event space.

A Wave of New Development

Because of worldwide demand for Miami and its rarefied annual occupancy rate, the city has spawned an almost unprecedented wave of new development over the last few years. The Greater Miami area now features nearly 400 hotels, with a total inventory of 50,000 rooms. Another 7,500 rooms are currently under development, according to The Greater Miami CVB's V.P. of Convention Sales Barry Moskowitz.

The city's hyper-development of new hotels has been a catalyst for the rapid acceleration of its popularity as a meeting destination, says Jaime Alvarez, president of Miami-based global meeting and event planning firm World Dimension. "One of the things that has definitely made Miami more attractive to corporate groups is our hotel infrastructure, which has grown exponentially in the last few years. And I have been very surprised by how rapidly that has happened, because not many years ago our lack of good hotel infrastructure was an issue in Miami."

But no longer.

"We were the first city in the United States to have a Mandarin Oriental hotel," Moskowitz says, noting that the property claims 2015 Forbes Five Star and AAA Five Diamond awards. "We were also the first city in the world to open a new JW Marriott Marquis," Moskowitz says. For 2015, the property holds a AAA Four Diamond rating.

Miami also ranks as the only city in the U.S. to boast four Ritz-Carlton hotels — in South Beach, Coconut Grove, Key Biscayne and most recently in Bal Harbour. And Four Seasons and Conrad have also opened properties in Miami.

"I don't think any other city has seen the kind of new hotel development we've had over the last several years," Moskowitz says. "It's unprecedented. And it's still going on. For example, we're now getting ready to open the first East (lifestyle) hotel in the U.S."

Complementing the planned expansion of the Miami Beach Convention Center, will be a new \$405 million, 800-room convention center headquarters hotel connecting to the convention center by skybridge. It will be developed by Portman Holdings and designed by Atlanta-based John Portman & Associates.

Argentine developer Alan Faena will debut a spectacular Faena District in Miami Beach this November. Billed as a "wonderland," it will feature a new hotel and art venue.

Landmark Hotels

Donald Trump acquired the fabled Doral golf resort and renamed it **Trump National Doral Miami** after investing \$250 million in a modernization and makeover project that was completed in March. The 800-acre, 643-room, AAA Four Diamond property, located less than 10 minutes from Miami International Airport, has hosted an annual PGA Tour event for more than 50 years, making its signature course, the Blue

"One of the things that has definitely made Miami more attractive to corporate groups is our hotel infrastructure, which has grown exponentially."



Jaime Alvarez, President
World Dimension, Miami, FL

Monster, hallowed ground for meeting attendees who want to play a memorable round of golf while they're in town. The resort boasts a total of four fully renovated championship golf courses as well as a full-service, state-of-the-art spa.

Trump National Doral Miami features 100,000 sf of completely transformed indoor meeting and event space and an additional 75,000 sf of outdoor function space.

Rosanne Kennedy, a director for Washington, DC-based Danaher Corporation, has held leadership conferences at Trump National Doral in 2011, 2013 and 2015. Danaher will return in 2017. "One thing we like very much is its proximity to Miami airport," she says. "That makes it very easy for our attendees. And the other thing we like is that it is the perfect size for our group. It's not too large and not too small."

Kennedy also gives the hotel high praise for its service. "That's another one of the reasons why we keep going back," she says. "The management and the conference staff do an excellent job for us. They are all superb at their jobs."

The property's meeting space also represents an ideal match for Danaher Corporation. "Their conference space is 'disconnected' from the hotel itself and the sleeping rooms, so you feel like you get away from the hotel and are secluded during your meeting sessions," Kennedy explains. "They also

have a tremendous amount of breakout rooms that give us a lot of options for finding just the perfect mix of space."

For her attendees, the resort's widely acclaimed golf courses are a big draw. "I always look for a golf course that is either immediately adjacent to a hotel or on-property," Kennedy says. "I don't want to have to be transporting people by bus so they can go play golf. So the fact that Trump National Doral has golf on-property is just another plus for us."

The hotel is also a favorite of Bacardi USA's Director of Corporate Meetings Victoria Ascione, CMP, CMM. "It offers impeccable style and excellent service," she says. "It also offers signature dining options and fantastic golf courses."

Another planner favorite is the **Fontainebleau Miami Beach**, a AAA Four Diamond award-winner every year since

2008. Opened in 1954, the Fontainebleau is an historic and architectural landmark designed by legendary architect Morris Lapidus, whose name is synonymous with a number of the city's most acclaimed buildings from its golden era.

Almost a half-century before South Beach emerged as a modern nightlife capital, the Fontainebleau served as the nerve center of a party scene that attracted the likes of Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack, Jackie Gleason, Elvis Presley and countless other movie stars, musicians and models. Some of the most famous scenes in the James Bond film "Goldfinger" were shot at the Fontainebleau.

Not resting on its laurels, the Fontainebleau has been updated and expanded into an upscale, world-class resort with a \$1 billion renovation completed in 2014. Today, the 20-acre oceanfront luxury resort, located at mid-beach



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Miami Hotels

about 30 blocks north of South Beach, features two of the area's most celebrated restaurants — the upscale, Forbes Four Star, AAA Four Diamond Chinese food and dim sum emporium Hakkasan and Forbes Four Star, AAA Four Diamond regional Italian culinary showcase Scarpetta from James Beard Award-winning chef Scott Conant. (Also see *Miami Dining Scene*.) The Fontainebleau is also home to the Forbes Four Star Lapis the Spa and LIV, currently the hottest nightclub in Miami Beach.

Just north of the Fontainebleau is another fabled Miami Beach landmark, the **Eden Roc Miami Beach**. In its heyday during the Golden Age of Miami Beach, its celebrity guests included Elizabeth Taylor, Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Frank Sinatra, Katherine Hepburn and Ernest Hemingway.

Designed by Morris Lapidus, the Eden Roc features architecture that embodies the glitz of a Hollywood stage



Eden Roc Miami Beach will debut Nobu Hotel at Eden Roc Miami Beach late this year.

set. During the 1950s and '60s, the world-famous hotel earned its longstanding reputation as "the Grande Dame of Miami Beach."

Now its singular history will enter a new era that is just as sensational and star-studded. Last December, Nobu Hotels and Eden Roc Miami Beach announced plans for the 210-room Nobu Hotel at Eden Roc Miami Beach, set to open late this year and featuring a signature Nobu restaurant and bar. Chef Nobu Matsuhisa, Academy Award-winning actor Robert DeNiro and Hollywood producer Meir Teper are the masterminds behind the much-anticipated project. The guest rooms will be located in the hotel's iconic original tower. The original Eden Roc will feature 421 rooms and the complex will include a 20,000-sf spa and fitness facility, and more than 70,000 sf of stylish meeting and event space.

"The (Trump National Doral) management and the conference staff do an excellent job for us. They are all superb at their jobs."

*Rosanne Kennedy, Director, Office of the CEO
Danaher Corporation, Washington, DC*



Outdoor movie screening in the "Sandbox" at the new Miami Beach Edition, which opened last fall.

Time-honored Hotels

A great option for serious business conferences and educational or training seminars is the Forbes Four Star, AAA Four Diamond **The Biltmore Hotel**, located in Coral Gables. Built in 1926 and situated on 150 lushly landscaped tropical acres, The Biltmore is a National Historic Landmark that offers 145 hotel rooms and 130 suites. Its swimming pool, one of the largest in the U.S., is the most famous and iconic in all of Miami.

In addition to amenities including a 12,000-sf spa and an 18-hole, par-71 championship golf course designed in 1925 by legendary golf architect Donald Ross, The Biltmore features more than 75,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting and function space located within the hotel and at an adjacent Conference Center of the Americas.

Another time-honored major meeting property is the 612-room **Hyatt Regency Miami**, located on the Miami River in the heart of downtown Miami and just 16 minutes from Miami International Airport. The perennially



The new 1 Hotel South Beach offers more than 100,000 sf of indoor/outdoor event space.

popular property is also located close to major downtown attractions such as Bayside Park, Mary Brickell Village and the Latin flavor of Little Havana.

The hotel, which is connected to the Miami Convention Center and the James L. Knight Center, features 100,000 sf of meeting and event space, including state-of-the-art meeting rooms, an elegant Regency Ballroom and the 28,000-sf Riverside Hall. The James L. Knight Center offers the 28,000-sf Riverfront Exhibit Hall, 17 meeting rooms, the 444-seat Ashe Auditorium and the 117-seat Miami Lecture Hall. The complex also features The Terrace, a beautiful open-air space that overlooks the scenic Miami River.

Chic New Hotels

Among the newest properties, Ascione particularly likes the 294-room **Miami Beach Edition**, opened in November 2014 and representing the first South Florida outpost of the critically acclaimed luxury boutique brand created in partnership between Marriott International and Ian Schrager, the Studio 54 cofounder who helped create the boutique hotel concept and put South Beach on the map in 1995 with his landmark Delano hotel. Located just a short walk north of South Beach restaurants and nightclubs, the urban chic outpost features two restaurants from Michelin-starred master chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten as well as a fashionable bar/lounge, basement bowling alley (with a bar menu from chef Jean-Georges), ice-skating rink (a genuine novelty in Miami), a full-service spa and 24-hour fitness center, and an 8,000-sf private event space.

Rounding out Ascione's list of favorite properties is the intimate and stylish, 140-room art deco **SLS South Beach**, which features a pair of signature restaurants: The Bazaar, from James Beard Award-winning chef Jose Andres; and Katsuya by Starck from master sushi chef Katsuya Uechi and featuring interior design from Philippe Starck — creator of the revolutionary public spaces at the Delano, which endure unchanged to this day, 20 years later. Starck also designed the hotel's 25,000 sf of meeting and event spaces.

Another red-hot new hotel is the 380-room **Thompson Miami Beach**, located on Collins Avenue just south of the



The Hyatt Regency Miami in the heart of downtown is connected to the Miami Convention Center.

Fontainebleau and Eden Roc. Featuring lush tropical gardens the Thompson, which opened last November, boasts the signature Seagrape restaurant from James Beard Award-winning chef and Miami legend Michelle Bernstein. The hotel's Crown Room offers an intimate environment with rare spirits and fine wines. The Thompson has 47,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting and event space.

A Next-generation Hotel

Earlier this year, the much-anticipated **1 Hotel South Beach** made its debut as the inaugural outpost of the new



The art deco SLS South Beach features 25,000 sf of flexible Philippe Starck-designed meeting and event space.

brand. Pioneered by former Starwood CEO Barry Sternlicht under the banner of his Starwood Capital Group, the 1 Hotel brand is designed to be both trendy and eco-friendly.

The new Miami Beach location, on the site of the old Roney Palace, has 426 rooms and more than 100,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting and event space. The signature Beachcraft restaurant, serving Mediterranean-inspired cuisine, is operated by James Beard Award-winning chef Tom Colicchio, his first Miami location. The 1 Hotel South Beach also features four swimming pools, including a 112-foot-long rooftop pool. Technological innovations include electronic check-in and access to a fleet of Tesla luxury electric cars for transportation.

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A Bacardi USA event on the field at Marlins Park.

Credit: Creative Focus Inc.

Phenomenal Affairs

Bicentennial Park on Biscayne Bay in downtown boasts one of the city's most spectacular new event venues, the **Pérez Art Museum Miami**. The facility features 200,000 sf of indoor and outdoor program space with spacious galleries; shaded outdoor verandas; a waterfront restaurant and bar; a museum shop; and an education center with a library, media lab and classroom spaces. Opening in Bicentennial Park in 2016 is the new **Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science**, which will offer event spaces with sweeping views of the bay.

Anchoring downtown Miami as the premier venue of its kind in Florida is the **Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts**, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary next year. Known as the Arsht Center, the facility houses Miami's local symphony, opera and ballet companies, and



The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts.

Credit: Greater Miami CVB

also presents touring companies of Broadway shows and musical concerts. Designed by world-renowned architect Cesar Pelli, the Arsht Center has state-of-the-art theater facilities, beautiful outdoor plazas, elegantly appointed private salons, and comfortable and flexible lobbies, rooms and theaters.

Individual venues at the Arsht Center available for meeting groups include the Ziff Ballet Opera House and Knight Concert Hall, which have large, fully equipped stages that can accommodate audiences of up to 2,400 and 2,200 people, respectively. The entire Orchestra Level of the Knight Concert Hall can be transformed into a Grand Ballroom. The Carnival Studio Theater and Peacock Rehearsal Room, both in the Ziff Ballet Opera House, are cozy, multipurpose

spaces that can accommodate just over 250 people in flexible configurations. For smaller groups, individual rooms in the Ballet Opera House and Concert Hall can accommodate up to 60 people.

Celebrating its 100th anniversary next year is another of Miami's most acclaimed venues, the landmark **Vizcaya Museum & Gardens** on Biscayne Bay in Coconut Grove. Vizcaya is an Italian Renaissance-style mansion that can host indoor functions or deliver an unforgettable experience in its famous outdoor gardens.

Another one-of-a-kind venue in Coconut Grove is the **Cruz Building**, a glamorous three-story venue highlighted by coral stone terraces. Its stunning interiors feature soaring ceilings, monumental stained-glass windows, European antiques and sculptures, massive hand-carved mahogany bars, a dramatic brass and marble staircase, wrought iron-work and sculptures, and more — all lit by interior gas flame lanterns and museum-quality antique chandeliers.

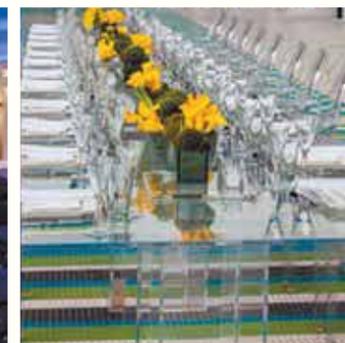
In Coral Gables are **Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden**, which features the only indoor rainforest in the U.S.; and the **Venetian Pool**, a lagoon carved out of coral rock. The historic landmark and swimming pool features caves, stone bridges and waterfalls.

On Watson Island near downtown is **Jungle Island**. "It's not just beautiful, but the wildlife is just amazing," says Greater Miami CVB's Barry Moskowitz. "And the view you get of the city's skyline is amazing."

A favorite venue of Victoria Ascione, CMP, CMM, director, corporate meetings for Bacardi USA, is **Marlins Park**, the spectacular new home of Major League Baseball's Miami Marlins. "Marlins Park," Ascione says, "is a great outdoor venue under the sun or stars, with a retractable roof that eliminates weather concerns." It offers stunning views of downtown Miami, as well as first-class amenities that include eight party suites, 42 individual suites, the West Plaza retail shops, Taste of Miami food area, a half-acre retractable window wall, a three-panel retractable roof. Marlins Park also offers award-winning catering, personalized messaging on the MarlinsVision Scoreboard, appearances by team mascot Billy The Marlin or the Marlins Energy Team, customized Marlins souvenirs, corporate batting practice sessions, "run the bases" experiences, ballpark photo sessions, fireworks and pool parties, as well as VIP tours.

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Cuisine Well Done

“Our dining scene and the incredible number of great restaurants have contributed a lot to our reputation as a world-class destination,” says Jaime Alvarez, president of Miami-based World Dimension. Adds Greater Miami CVB’s Barry Moskowitz, “Almost every day now, there’s a new restaurant opening. And they’re not just any restaurants. They’re high-end restaurants from some of the best chefs in the world. And that’s happening because every major chef in the world now wants to have a restaurant in Miami.”

New, high-profile Miami Beach restaurants include: **Morimoto South Beach**, from Food Network “Iron Chef” superstar Masaharu Morimoto and located in the Shelbourne Wyndham Grand South Beach hotel. **Quality Meats** opened on Collins Avenue in February as a second outpost of the critically acclaimed New York restaurant that serves a menu based on classic butchery and large cuts of meat that are cured, smoked or aged in-house. And the modern Japanese eatery **SOHO Bay** by Brazilian restaurateur Karine Queiroz opened in March. **Piripi** opened earlier this year in Coral Gables, serving Spanish-Basque fare in the Shops at Merrick Park.



Credit: Fontainebleau

Well-established Forbes Five Star restaurants include: **Azul**, which serves creative Asian-French fusion fare at the Mandarin Oriental, Miami; and Japanese restaurant **NAOE**, located nearby on Brickell Key. The AAA Five Diamond French restaurant **Palme d’Or** at The Biltmore is another of Miami’s most acclaimed culinary landmarks.

Rounding out the top options for meeting groups are the steak houses **Morton’s** in the Brickell district and **Smith & Wollensky** on Miami Beach; and the iconic **Joe’s Stone Crab** at the southern tip of South Beach.

Among Victoria Ascione’s personal favorites for her Bacardi USA groups are **Juvia**, which serves trendy international cuisine on Lincoln Road in South Beach; **Prime 112**, a classic steak house; and **Lure**, the seafood restaurant at the Loews Miami Beach hotel.

Alvarez is partial to **Bianca** at the Delano; **1826 Restaurant & Lounge**, which serves contemporary American cuisine in South Beach; **Baoli**, another popular South Beach restaurant that serves an eclectic combination of sushi, pasta and grilled meats; and **Yuca**, a trendy Cuban restaurant on Lincoln Road.

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Ocean to Table

Not many hotels can claim their own signature fishing vessel to provide fresh catch on a daily basis for their menus, but The Fontainebleau Miami can — the **BleauFish** runs every morning out of Coconut Grove’s Dinner Key Marina, delivering fish, lobster and Florida stone crab claws. Much of the bounty is transported live to the Fontainebleau’s basement “Water World,” a wonderland of six 300-gallon saltwater tanks kept at ideal temperature and lighting conditions to mimic life in the ocean. “The less stress a fish feels, the more delicious it’s going to taste,” says executive chef Thomas Connell. Diners can taste the freshness for themselves at **Hakkasan**, **Scarpetta**, **Michael Mina 74**, **StripSteak by Michael Mina** and **La Cote**, a chic oceanfront Mediterranean grill.

Fontainebleau Miami Beach executive chef Thomas Connell displays the day’s catch, which he keeps fresh in the hotel’s saltwater tanks (top).



Credit: Fontainebleau

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