THE MAGIC CITY

Experience Miami through the eyes of a local.

Miami is much more than the collective stereotypes would have you believe. It's often seen as a veritable Vegas of the Southeast, but when the lights turn on at the clubs and the party's over, that's when the city really shines — and when the magic happens.

By Christine Borges







From left to right: Camilo Rios; J. Kevin Foltz (2)

Spend the day sightseeing atop a double-decker bus and shop at beach-themed souvenir shops; or book a ritzy hotel and party till the wee hours on the beach. No matter what you choose to do, you'll still go home more exhausted than you arrived. But when it's all said and done, did you really experience Miami? Forego the tourist traps and see Miami as the locals do: sans sunburn and with the vibrancy that makes this the Magic City.

"There's nothing wrong with wanting to experience the Miami you see on TV and photos, but Miami isn't really all that glitz and glamour," says Jose Duran, web editor for the *Miami New Times*. He's lived here most of his life, and it's his job to scope out what's new in the nightlife circuit. "The rising popularity of areas like Wynwood and the Design District are already getting some people off the barrier islands and exploring the mainland."

Urban Art Scene

Though South Beach is what most drives tourism in the area, there's a whole other side to South Florida that you don't encounter on a standard tour. "Its roots go deep," says local artist Franklin Roosevelt Sinanan. "But too often all tourists see is the bottom of a happy hour cocktail glass." Sinanan sees South Beach daily as an artist-in-residence at the Art Center/South Florida on Lincoln Road. And it's Miami's differences that inspire his provocative work. "It has opened up a portal into my childhood in Trinidad," he confides. "It's a melting pot to be sure, and it reminds me of a cook-up. It has a little bit of everything in it, but somehow it just works… and it's so satisfying."

This melting pot culture that Sinanan speaks of is a Miami trademark, and it's one that shapes the city. Michael Gran, better known as Typoe, started off as a local Miami street artist. As co-founder of the artistic collective/gallery space Primary Flight, he's helped shape Wynwood, an area now known for its endless murals and creative influence. He's represented by Spinello Gallery, where he'll have a solo exhibit during Miami Art Week come December. He also helps curate the art displayed on many of the buildings throughout the city. "We belong to the renaissance that I think is happening right now in Miami," he says. "We could've easily gone to New York or L.A. or anywhere else to make tons of money. But we're staying here, and we're making it work."

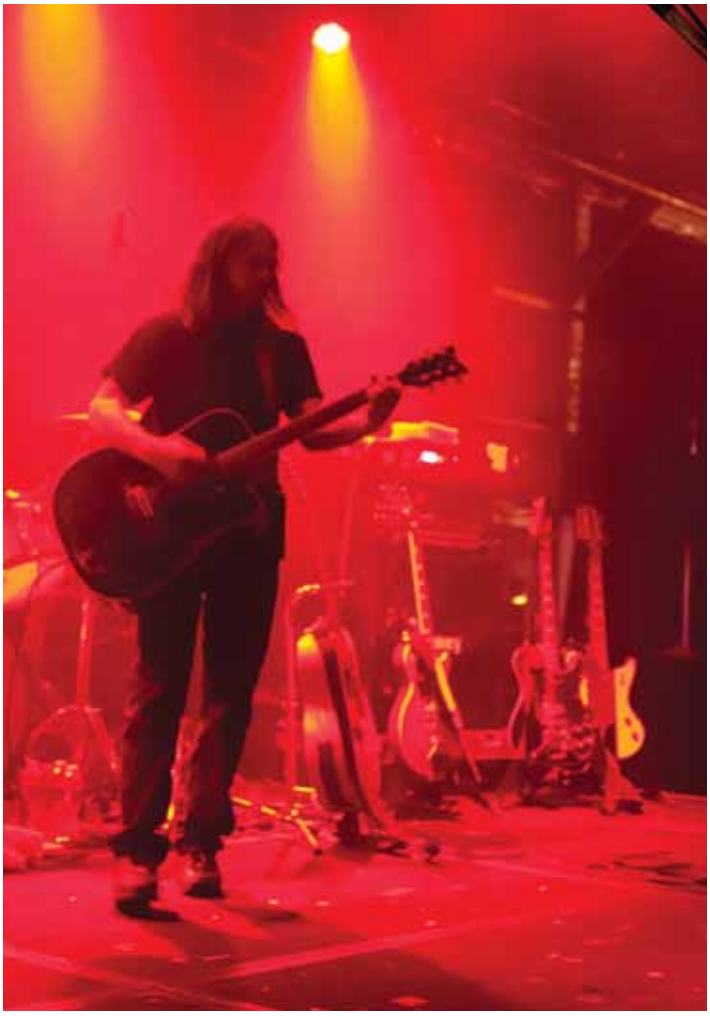
Art galleries that showcase national and emerging local artists, like Art Center/South Florida, Primary Flight and Spinello, have sprung up all over the city. The Keni Valenti Gallery in Wynwood is a hidden art-space-meets-fashion-museum, featuring rotating exhibitions of priceless designer wares from Valenti's collection of more than 10,000 pieces. For those who favour an updated viewing experience, Locust Projects offers a twist on the traditional gallery visit: a series of pop-up social events that include creative collaborations, artist talks and even a library of more than 1,500 personally collected art books.

If you crave a full-on gallery hopping experience, go to Wynwood and the Design District on the second Saturday of the month. Simply dubbed Art Walk, all of the galleries in the area open their doors to the public at 6 p.m., with some offering live music for entertainment and others serving alcoholic libations. Wynwood Walls, between Wynwood Kitchen and Bar and Joey's Italian Restaurant, is at the centre of all the activity. Representing a who's who of the street art scene, the open-air gallery houses



Jessica Goldman Srebnick is at the helm of Goldman Properties, which owns the Wynwood Walls space.

J. Kevin Foltz



murals from the likes of Kenny Scharf, Shepard Fairey and Ron English. A food truck rally of more than 20 trucks serving up tasty grub pops up across the street from the galleries, as does a street market with local vendors selling both vintage and DIY fashions and jewellery.

Fashionable Locals

The Art Walk is not the only time you'll find fashion on Miami's streets. Local designers abound here, and while many have moved on to places like New York to hone their craft, quite a few have chosen to stick around. "If you are driven, you can make anything happen in Miami," says local designer Karelle Levy, creator of KRELwear. Her knit-based, bright designs have been featured in *Elle* and *Harper's Bazaar*, among others, and have been spotted on celebrities like Nicki Minaj and Alanis Morissette. Fashion in Miami leans toward the bespoke and custom, and locals love it, whether they're sporting a piece from KRELwear, a pair of custom loafers from local brand Del Toro shoes or a hand-painted summer dress from Ramona La Rue by Arianne — a Miami staple that's in fashion year round.



The Inside Scoop

J.D. Gibson, Senior Manager Regional Airport Operations, personally recommends some of his favourite Miami restaurants and cafés:

- Versailles Restaurant — 3555 SW 8th St.
- The River Seafood and Oyster Bar — 650 South Miami Ave.
- Perricone's Marketplace and Café — 15 SE 10th St.
- El Palacio de los Jugos — 5721 W. Flagler St.

When she's in Miami, Alina Valledor, Reservations Supervisor, usually visits her favourite spots to save and spots to splurge:

- The Big Cheese — 8080 SW 67th Ave.
- Scully's Tavern — 9809 SW 72nd St.
- Captain's Tavern — 9625 South Dixie Highway
- Villagio — 360 San Lorenzo Ave., Suite 1430
- Oceanaire — 900 South Miami Ave., Suite 111

Beats and Eats

"Miami has a little bit of everything," says Michelle Leshem, co-founder of creative agency SuperMarket Creative and half of the DJ duo Ess & Emm. She is an animated addition to the city's nightlife. "Miami is growing into an epicentre for more than just professional beach bums and partiers," she says. "You can now feel like you are being transported to a bar in Oregon or a boudoir in Paris with many of the new spots that are not only giving you an authentic environment but an organic experience to match it."

That culture includes mainland spots like The Vagabond and Bardot, which host indie rock bands and local bands alike on a regular basis. Hoy Como Ayer is an institution on historic Calle Ocho that attracts those looking for a little Latin music — and, reportedly, some of the best mojitos in the city.

Don't let the name fool you; Grand Central in Downtown Miami is not a railroad station… anymore. It's a hybrid of sorts: a lounge meets music venue meets bar that hosts some of the biggest names in music with meet-and-greet opportunities and amazing LED lighting. Their upstairs loft space, The Garret, is really popular with locals because of its 90s hip-hop nights on Fridays, and its dance classics and undiscovered music offerings on Saturdays. And when the doors close, The Corner — which is quite literally around the corner — offers late night cocktails, a vast beer selection and eats like croquettes and homemade ice cream. The dark, candlelit bar keeps the blinds closed and stays open until 8 a.m. on weekends.

J. Kevin Foltz (2)



In Wynwood, you'll come across two bars that rule the block: Wood Tavern and Gramps. Simply called Wood by locals, this bar seems plucked straight out of Brooklyn. Picnic tables surround its outdoor beer garden, and its taco truck, Pancho Taco, serves up late-night munchies.

Gramps offers a cocktail menu that seems more like a secret; the only mention is on a small board over the bar. Their knowledgeable bartenders have a pioneering cocktail spirit and create otherworldly concoctions on the fly, merely based off of what you say you're used to drinking. The menu is classic cocktails with a Gramps twist, like the Gramps Old Fashioned — a mix of sweeter than average orange and ango bitters with heat from black pepper syrup and aged rum, not bourbon, as the spirit of choice.

"We use historical references for those drinks — from pre-prohibition to the current cocktail renaissance," says bartender Trevor Alberts. Ingredients are always fresh here, to boot. "We're not running to Whole Foods for this stuff," Alberts muses, "we get it locally."

It's this homegrown aesthetic that drives a lot of Miami businesses, including Panther Coffee. Also located in Wynwood, this local shop makes such smooth brews that sugar becomes unnecessary, and it infuses the space with energising details like coffee-inspired art, tastings and readings.

Whether it's the locavore spirit; the themed pop-up bars, boutiques and restaurants, or the mishmash of cultures, quirks are an integral part of Miami's nature. The town has an island vibe and big city dreams — and the locals wouldn't have it any other way.

Don't Miss Out

Miami events heat up during the summer months.

Miami Spa Month
July 1–August 31
Enjoy special treatments at some of Miami's premier spas for the summer; a real treat for locals and tourists alike. *miamispamonth.com*

Slava's SnowShow
July 31–August 25
The internationally acclaimed show — a cross between Cirque du Soleil and Blue Man Group — returns to Miami. *arshtcenter.org*

Miami Spice Month
August 1–September 30
This restaurant promotion showcases the best in Miami cuisine, offering three-course prix fixe lunches and dinners at leading eateries for a fraction of the cost. *ilovemiamispice.com*

Dwntwn Concert Series with Conjunto Progreso and Palo!
August 9
Combining a traditional Cuban ensemble with Afro-Cuban funk, this free concert is part of the ever popular Dwntwn Concert Series. *dwntwnconcerts.com*

Brazilian Film Festival
August 17–24
Celebrate the best Brazilian films of the year at independent cinemas around Miami. *brazilianfilmfestival.com*

Depeche Mode
September 15
One of the most influential groups to date continues their Delta Machine World Tour at one of South Florida's largest venues. *thebbtcenter.com*

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