

TRAVEL AID

A New Miami

And a day trip to the Bahamas.

BY DAVID ARTAVIA

Miami's vast gay history has many layers—from the revolution of Art Deco architecture in the 1920s and '30s, to today's sophisticated developments in downtown: Brickell City Centre, with rooftop bars, restaurants, and malls; and the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County, with three state-of-the-art theaters.

In this metropolis of diverse and ever-changing cultures, LGBT visibility has helped define the city's image. When organizers canceled the long-planned 10-day LGBT sporting event, World OutGames, at the last minute in 2017, the local community banded together to save the event; in the process rejuvenating the city's morale and strengthening its bonds.

A similar sentiment was palpable as Hurricane Irma barreled down on the "Magic City." Even in the face of certain destruction, residents had no doubt they would rebuild. And yet they haven't had to. Irma had minimal impact on Miami and its beautiful sandy beaches.

The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau launched a #MiamiNow promotion in the wake of the hurricane, giving travelers unprecedented discounts. While most offers expired at the close of 2017, updated specials can be found at MiamiAndBeaches.com.

The Shelborne South Beach (Shelborne.com) provides "beach chic," with its own backyard beach; it also offers a killer breakfast buffet, and an in-house cabaret show featuring stars-in-the-making. If beach hotels aren't your thing, the new downtown SLS Brickell Hotel (SLSHotels.com/Brickell) gives you the luxury treatment—with an impressive rooftop pool and separate restaurants by award-winning chefs José Andrés and Michael Schwartz, respectively, and it's walking distance to the evolving nightlife.

If you want to see South Beach's most epic drag shows, you need to pay homage to the famous gay hangout, The Palace (PalaceSouthBeach.com), which now has a new home at Amarillo restaurant on Ocean Drive. It's worth the visit simply to watch the faces of shocked taxi drivers as beautiful drag stars strut their stuff on the street crosswalk.

To get a true sense of the diverse cultures inhabiting Miami, visit the Española Way/Washington Avenue shopping district and enjoy a hot meal at Mare Mio, featuring fresh fish, line-caught by celebrated restaurateur Claudio Giordano's local fisherman. If you're up for a brisk walk, don't miss the incredible artistry that defines the Wynwood Arts District with the one and only Ryan "The Wheelbarrow" Ferrell,



a local screen-printing performance artist who also offers the quintessential guide to Miami's street art (MiamiBestGraffitiGuide.com).

If you can drag yourself away from the city, you'll find it's incredibly easy to pop over to The Bahamas (Bahamas.com) for a day. Bimini, the closest Bahamian island to the U.S., beckons beach bums, water adventurers, high-rollers, and spa-goers alike for an easy tropical escape and the clearest blue waters imaginable. My favorite is the adults-only infinity pool and Monkey Business bar at Resorts World Bimini (RWBimini.com).

Back in Miami, Little Havana is a must-see neighborhood. This summer, visit the new Sterling Market on Miami's famous Lincoln Road (LincolnRoadMall.com). It will be home to multiple vendors, including LGBT-owned Mr. Bing, specializing in shaved ice. Make a stop at Meat Market, too, to have a bite of their Nutella dessert—it's out of this world!

Boance to The Bahamas (from top): Joe's Conch Shack on the Bahamian island of Bimini preps the lobster catch. A birds-eye view of Luno Beach near Resorts World Bimini.