

How to Make the Most of Miami's Coconut Grove

A mix of bohemian style, Biscayne view—and just a little Miami flash.

BY NILA DO SIMON

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The Coconut Grove neighborhood, 10 minutes south of downtown [Miami](#), has lived many lives. To fully understand it, you have to know the rich history that makes it distinctly Miami—but with roots quite different from the city's other neighborhoods. In the 1870s The Grove, as locals call it, drew Bahamians to the area, enticed by the nearly free land provided for in the [Florida Homestead Act](#) along with the familiar tropical climate. Then, the turn of the 20th century brought the Florida East Coast Railway along with wealthy white settlers looking to establish winter homes (such as tycoon William Deering, whose son created one of the area's enduring landmarks, the Vizcaya estate). Soon after, creatives flocked here, including Robert Frost and [Tennessee Williams](#), whose world premiere of "Sweet Bird of Youth" took place at the Coconut Grove Playhouse. By the 1960s, it had changed yet again, as coffeehouses, art galleries, and smoke shops brought

the counterculture set, including a chance meeting between David Crosby and an undiscovered Joni Mitchell. These days, a resurgence in development is pulling travelers from glitzy Miami Beach to become the newest generation of Grovites. It's a little Bohemian, a little Bahamian, and a jewel by the Biscayne Bay.

What to Do in Coconut Grove

Though The Grove has its share of new shine, including a major face-lift of the shopping complex **CocoWalk**, the neighborhood's history anchors it. [The Vizcaya Museum & Garden](#), built between 1914 and 1922 by industrialist James Deering, is a National Historic Landmark and stunning estate. Vizcaya's antique- and art-filled interiors are rivaled only by 10 acres of formal Italian-inspired gardens. The museum's free audio tours offer an even deeper dive into the collection and the grounds.

If seeing more of Florida's outdoors is in the cards, visit the five-acre **Barnacle State Park**, a prime spot for bird watching, thanks to its [tropical hardwood hammock](#) known for its diverse evergreens, trees, and shrub. Speaking of the outdoors, the best way to see and experience Coconut Grove is on two wheels. Grab a Citi Bike at any one of the five stations in The Grove and roll along the tree-lined paths, including the five-mile **Commodore Trail**, and shuttle between destinations built around centuries-old banyan and oak trees.

Take advantage of being on the water and charter a boat trip from **Dinner Key Marina** or, better yet, learn the basics of sailing yourself with the [Coral Gables Sailing Club](#), which offers two-day courses for adults.

The Grove has also long been considered an intellectual's neighborhood, and in 2018 it welcomed an outpost of **Books & Books** (there are also locations in Bal Harbour, Coral Gables, Pinecrest, and the [Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts](#)). It's not only an independent book seller with a vast collection of titles and genres, it's also a local arbiter of style and culture.

If you're looking for something to take home, Coconut Grove is a major shopping hub loaded with independently owned boutiques. Pick up interior pieces and apparel at [The Showroom](#)—part home goods store, part women's boutique. [The Bazaar Project](#) features exclusive home accessories sourced from around the world, along with a posh cafe that has a plentiful lunch and coffee menu.

What to eat in Coconut Grove

With its many sidewalk cafes, Coconut Grove is an ideal neighborhood to add some people-watching to your lunch stop. **Greenstreet Cafe** has been a mainstay on Main Highway for over 30 years, where you'll find locals and the occasional celebrity drinking bloody Marys and dining under the canopy of umbrellas during breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Or if you aren't hungry yet, grab a coffee at third wave star **Panther Coffee** and enjoy it outdoors on the sidewalk patio.

For fine dining with a Miami twist, there's **Ariete**, the brainchild of James Beard Award semifinalist Michael Beltran, who fuses his Cuban-American heritage with classical French techniques in dishes like the classic Cuban *arroz imperial*, served with guinea hen fricassée. Other high-end spots to bookmark are **Sapore di Mare**, an Italian standout with an off-menu cacio e pepe topped with shaved truffles, and **Tigertail + Mary**, which serves a weekend brunch menu of creative New American cuisine.

Sweeten your visit with a slice of key lime pie at **Fireman Derek's Bake Shop**, one of 50 pies created by a former fireman. If that all seems a bit heavy, get cleansed at **Planta**, with its upscale plant-based menu, before grabbing a Florida craft beer at **LoKal**. If you're traveling with kids, stop by the hip **Glass and Vine**, located right next to the playground at Peacock Park, and grab an outdoor seat to keep an eye on the kiddos while they blow off some steam.

Where to Stay in Coconut Grove

When **Mr. C Miami Coconut Grove** opened its doors in 2019, locals thought it would be a major disruptor to the neighborhood's quirky, funky style because of its modern design, sophisticated grandeur, and ability to draw A-listers like Jennifer Lopez and Alex Rodriguez to its Italian rooftop restaurant, Bellini. But it reflects both the new and old of The Grove. Built on sculptural stilts, it's a 21st century homage to **the historic Stiltsville structures**, the pastel-colored homes built on pilings located about a mile into Biscayne Bay. It also puts you in the center of everything; just a short walk to The Grove's gluttonous vices such as the aforementioned Fireman's Derek Bake Shop and Harry's Pizzeria, as well as Peacock Park and CocoWalk.