

HOME AWAY FROM HOME





Luxury resorts throughout South Florida offer irresistible staycation escapes

BY ALYSSA FISHER AND KEVIN KAMINSKI

THE DIPLOMAT BEACH RESORT

The buzz: What does \$100 million buy you these days in the resort industry? If you're The Diplomat, a mainstay on Hollywood Beach since 1958, it's a return to glory thanks to a jaw-dropping transformation that manages to find the sweet spot between sophistication and coastal comfort. The face-lift, which started in 2015, reimagined sightlines in the lobby and pool areas, capitalized on natural light and brought a casual elegance to the 1,000 rooms. Part of the Curio Collection by Hilton, The Diplomat now offers 10 culinary spots, including destination restaurants Point Royal from chef Geoffrey Zakarian, Monkital from Michael Schulson and the iconic Diplomat Prime steak house. The cascading waterfalls and dramatic beachfront pools, including a Dip & Slide area for children, are among the many reasons to venture outside—as is access to the Great White Catamaran, sailing/yacht charters, water recreation activities and the nearby 18-hole golf course.

Summer specials: Fashion icon Trina Turk has partnered with The Diplomat for a cabana experience (pictured) unlike any other in South Florida. Along with a personal butler, the experience (starting at \$1,500) features a create-your-own mimosa station, a mini massage, a Trina Turk ice bucket, and a \$150 gift card to the Trina Turk boutique in Miami.

Contact: 3555 S. Ocean Drive, Hollywood; 954.602.6000; diplomatresort.com



MARGARITAVILLE HOLLYWOOD BEACH RESORT

The buzz: Jimmy Buffett is the inspiration behind this 17-story destination resort on the Hollywood Beach Broadwalk, but if you think the property named after the singer's highest-charting solo single is about nothing more than watchin' the sun bake, think again. For all its laid-back charms, Margaritaville also knows how to provide an adrenaline rush—thanks, in part, to the FlowRider Double surfing simulator, as well as access to stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking. Live entertainment is another staple of the property, with everything from acoustic guitarists and reggae to rock bands and rollicking party music that, on weekends, can go deep into the night. Still searchin' for that lost shaker of salt? No worries. Bartenders gladly will salt your margarita glass at cocktail venues throughout the AAA Four Diamond-rated resort—such as the License to Chill rooftop terrace and the 5 O'Clock Somewhere Bar & Grill. JWB Prime Steak and Seafood gives guests an upscale dining option, while the two-story Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville provides more casual fare.

Summer specials: The Great American Summer Fun package, ideal for families, features free breakfast for children 12 and under, along with \$25 per night in "summer bucks" for on-site recreational activities (rates start at \$259 for a two-night stay). For

those interested in a more intimate experience, the Summer Love Stories We Could Tell package promises a 50-minute Swedish couples massage at the St. Somewhere Spa, paddleboarding for two and a \$100 nightly resort credit (starting at \$399).

Contact: 1111 N. Ocean Drive, Hollywood; 954.874.4444; margaritavillehollywoodbeachresort.com

EAU PALM BEACH RESORT & SPA

The buzz: Designed to evoke the intimate, luxurious Palm Beach lifestyle, this resort is no stranger to accolades. It was recently named a *Forbes Travel Guide* Five-Star Hotel for 2017, its second consecutive year of distinction. It also has been recognized by *Condé Nast Traveler* as the top resort on Florida's Atlantic Coast in the Readers' Choice Awards. Set on seven oceanfront acres with lush tropical gardens, the property includes a top spa, four restaurants (its newest, the outdoor Breeze Ocean Kitchen, serves Floridian

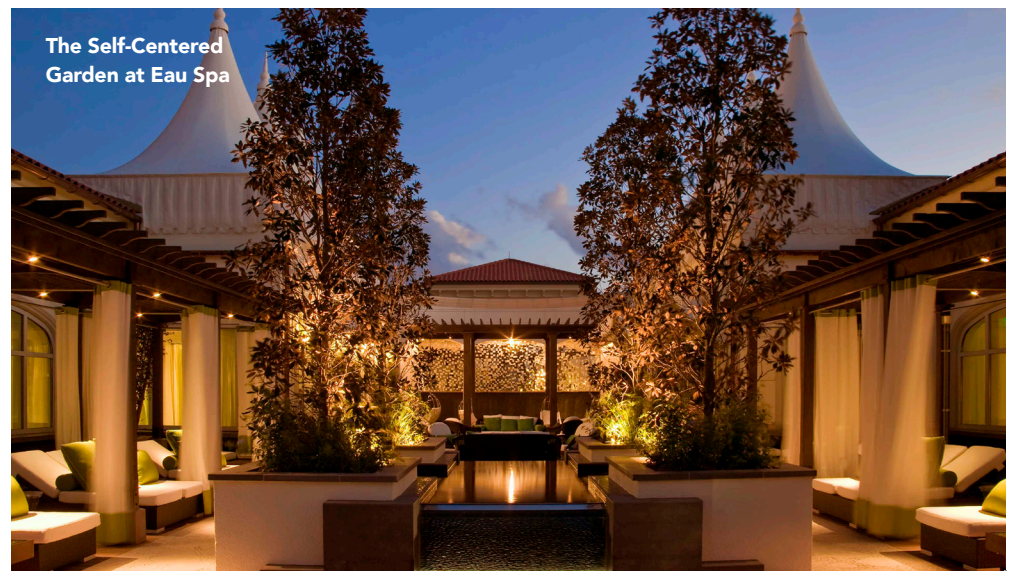
flavors, vintage cocktails and local craft beers), three Har-Tru clay tennis courts, two pools, and clubs for children and teens. It also has introduced a fresh fitness menu, including silent and aerial yoga instruction and Total Body Resistance classes.

Summer specials: The Beauty & The Beach Ultimate Girls' Getaway Package includes a two-night stay, daily spa treatment and daily cocktail, plus one-way transportation to Worth Avenue or downtown Delray Beach, starting at \$779 a person. For yoga enthusiasts in town Aug. 11-13, celebrity instructor Eric Paskel, known for his rock 'n' roll persona, leads a high-vibe weekend retreat. The Yoga Rocks Retreat packages include an ocean-view (\$899) or resort-view (\$799) room; all-access pass for yoga classes, spa amenities, the pool and beach; and a breakfast buffet both mornings. Additional all-access passes are available for \$199 each.

Contact: 100 S. Ocean Blvd., Manalapan; 561.540.4960; eauspa.com

HYATT HOUSE NAPLES

The buzz: This resort-style hotel in the heart of Naples is nestled on prominent Fifth Avenue South, not far from world-class shopping, dining, the popular city pier and beaches. The waterfront hotel's restaurant and bar overlook Gordon River, as do some of its 183 rooms and suites (which come with fully equipped kitchens). Several have furnished lanais, as well. Rent a boat





Hyatt House Naples

or kayak from the hotel's dock for a daytime adventure and then relax later—grill by the pool and end the day by the fire pit.

Summer specials: For a limited time, take advantage of the Summer Sunset Dinner Cruise Package for Two. Contact the hotel for details.

Contact: 1345 Fifth Ave. S., Naples; 239.775.1000; naples.house.hyatt.com

MARRIOTT HARBOR BEACH RESORT & SPA

The buzz: Given the dearth of resorts right on the sand in Fort Lauderdale, having South Florida's largest private beach in its backyard isn't a bad selling point for this 16-acre property. But that's just an appetizer when it comes to



Marriott Harbor Beach and its 650 recently renovated rooms. The culinary roster is led by executive chef Adrienne Grenier's inventive seasonal menu at 3030 Ocean; equally impressive is the indoor/outdoor dining at Sea Level, and the breakfast buffet and Sunday brunch at Riva. Family-friendly activities and perks include beach soccer, basketball, tennis, watersports, dive-in movies on Fridays and Saturdays—and poolside cookies and lemonade every afternoon at 2:30. Looking for a little revitalization? The 22,000-square-foot Spa at Harbor Beach Resort features 17 private treatment rooms, a separate spa pool and a fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment.

Summer specials: The Vacation Like a VIP package, good through Oct. 15, includes complimentary room upgrades, \$100 in resort credit, valet parking, a \$25 American Express gift card—and deals at participating museums, restaurants, spas, fishing/boating outlets and other destinations in Greater Fort Lauderdale, courtesy of the Convention & Visitors Bureau's two-for-one summer savings program. Rates range from \$309 to \$539 a night.

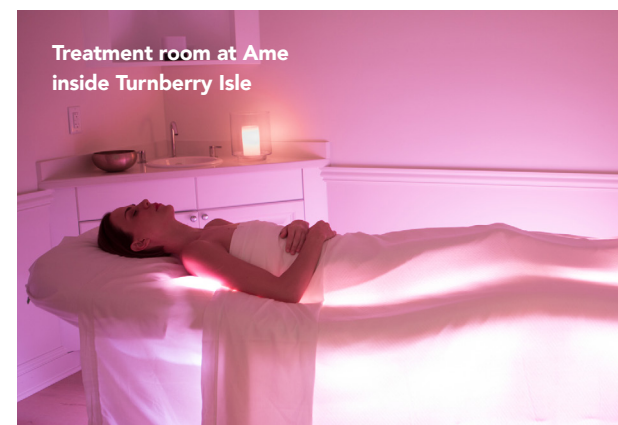
Contact: 3030 Holiday Drive, Fort Lauderdale; 954.525.4000; marriottharborbeach.com

TURNBERRY ISLE MIAMI

The buzz: Those staying at this resort can be as active as they desire, thanks to two 18-hole championship golf courses (which have hosted PGA and LPGA tournaments) and a professional tennis program with instruction from top coaches. There's also a 7,500-square-foot pool, 1,600-foot-long lazy river and 35-foot-high waterslide. The newest highlight is Ame, a luxury full-service spa and wellness center. Visitors can partake in a personalized, integrative program designed by medical experts to relax, rejuvenate or even detoxify. For a wellness-filled weekend, consider Camp Ame, an all-inclusive, three-day, two-night retreat that includes nutritional classes, group fitness, yoga and meditation, spa services, social events and vegetarian meals.

Summer specials: The Amazing Getaway includes a daily buffet breakfast for two at Corsair Kitchen & Bar, 50-minute Swedish Massage (plus the preliminary Wellness Circuit), \$50 gift card to the Aventura Mall, 20 percent off the resort's retail and spa, daily use of a cabana at Laguna Pool, complimentary shuttle and overnight valet parking. Rates begin at \$305 a person each night. Summer's Best Package includes a \$50 daily resort credit to use for spa services, drinks, meals, golf and more. Rates begin at \$199 a night.

Contact: 19999 W. Country Club Drive, Aventura; 305.933.6930; amewellness.com



Treatment room at Ame inside Turnberry Isle



THE CONFIDANTE MIAMI BEACH

The buzz: When Hyatt purchased Thompson Miami Beach last April, adding the chic hotel to its Unbound Collection of boutique properties, many wondered what that meant for a mid-century getaway that already had undergone a nearly \$100 million transformation the previous year. As it turned out, Hyatt changed more than just the name. Now called The Confidante, the 363-room resort offers an inspired fitness program thanks to a partnership with V Art of Wellness and its roster of personable trainers. Summer classes include vinyasa yoga on the 10th-floor spa deck, resistance training in the pool, and boot camps on the sand. Already a formidable culinary destination with “Top Chef” alum Dale Talde’s namesake Asian-American restaurant on-site, The Confidante has raised its profile with the addition of Bird & Bone, chef Richard Hales’ soul-stirring ode to Southern comfort food (think skillet cornbread, chicken and waffles, or roasted pork shank with Swank Farms vegetables). Nina’s House, the 1930s-era bungalow brimming with bohemian décor that serves cocktails and street tacos, only adds to the air of cool at The Confidante.

Summer specials: Forget Vegas. Bring the bridal party to The Confidante for a Bachelorette Bash that includes connecting suites with ocean views, a spa day, private beach workouts, manicures, Champagne, cocktails—and much more. The package starts at \$4,000 for a two-night stay with

four people.

Contact: 4041 Collins Ave., Miami Beach; 305.424.1234; theconfidantehotel.com

NOBU EDEN ROC HOTEL

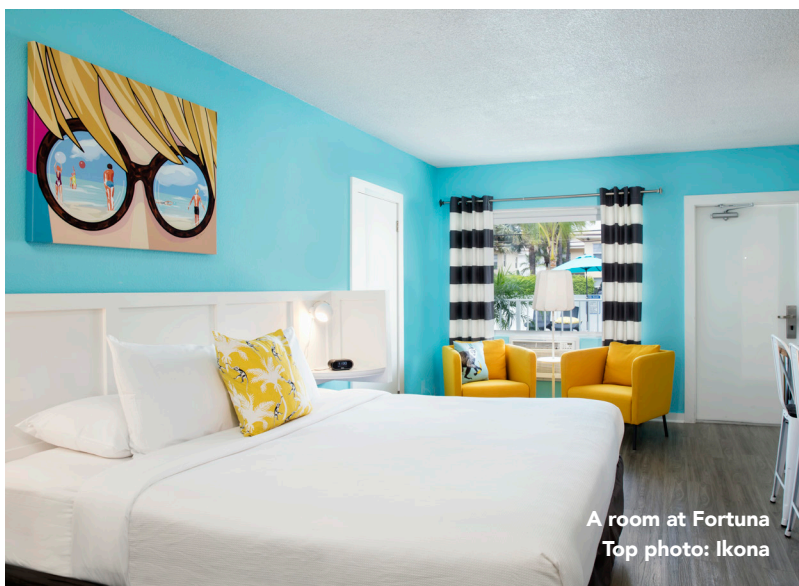
The buzz: This recently renovated property is pitched as two hotels with one address, sharing common areas and amenities. Their ambiances, however, set them apart. Eden Roc represents Miami Beach luxury at its best—timeless and sophisticated, its new fixtures seamlessly blending with the glamorous accents from its beginnings in the mid-1950s. Tropical Miami style seeps into the beachfront property, which offers 418 rooms and three distinctive pools. Nobu Hotel, which takes up several floors in Eden Roc’s

legendary tower and soon will replace it, rolls out luxury in the form of simplicity and relaxation. Designer David Rockwell has created a contemporary Japanese beach house feeling within the rooms with wood furniture, blue and purple accents, lantern-style lighting and black-and-white photography of Japanese landscapes, complete with a private pool (still under construction). Foodies will recognize Nobu Restaurant, created by celebrity chef Nobuyuki “Nobu” Matsuhisa, who is known for his fusion of traditional Japanese dishes and Peruvian ingredients. The culinary experience continues at Malibu Farm, a new farm-to-table restaurant overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. The spa, with its Zen garden elements, reflects the feeling Matsuhisa has cultivated. Just as he begins his day with stretches to awaken the body, mind and spirit, all treatments begin and end with a gentle Nobu Stretching Ritual.

Summer specials: Indulge in the Spa Serenity Escape, which includes two nights at Eden Roc, daily breakfast at Nobu, two 50-minute spa treatments and the option to join daily fitness classes.

Contact: 4525 Collins Ave., Miami Beach; 305.531.0000; nobuedenroc.com





A room at Fortuna
Top photo: Ikona

STAY SMALL

Boutique hotels close to Fort Lauderdale Beach deliver intimate getaway options

BY MICHELLE F. SOLOMON

A hospitality revolution is playing out along Fort Lauderdale Beach, where developers such as Pawel Plata and his wife, Marta Gzella-Plata, are providing vacationers with lodging options beyond the high rise.

The Platas are at the forefront of a boutique boom, along with other hotel developers seeking to recreate what the Art Deco District did for Miami Beach.

“The boutique hotel movement is stronger than ever,” Pawel says. “Unlike many overdesigned and generic hotels, we want to stand out for preserving the historical authenticity of Fort Lauderdale.”

Plata and his wife, originally from Poland, moved to Fort Lauderdale in 2013, and soon bought a group of 1950s-era, mom-and-pop motels that sat steps away from Fort Lauderdale Beach. Instead of tearing them down, the Platas made multimillion-dollar renovations.

They already have introduced three of their properties as part of the Gzella Collection, each with a different personality, but all with the same appeal—cozy, no-frills rooms intended to create an intimate and personalized experience for travelers, while embracing the prime location near State Road A1A.

A staycation at the Gzella Collection’s Ikona, Fortuna or newly opened Fala provides an escape that doesn’t feel touristy. The properties are built to give the impression that you’ve checked into your own private paradise.

The jewel of the collection is the three-story Ikona, reimagined from the iconic Shell motel at 3030 Bayshore Drive and across the street from the behemoth W Hotel and Residences. There’s not much to rekindle memories of the Shell at Ikona except for the location, although Pawel notes that despite the motel’s ultra-modern sophistication, the “integrity of the original architecture of all of the original motels was kept intact.”

Ikona’s interior was designed by Blanche Garcia, a designer featured on Travel Channel’s “Hotel Impossible.” Pawel and Marta were fans of the show, so he decided to contact her.

Gzella also has Fortuna, formerly the Seaside Motel, at 350 N. Birch Road, which opened in 2016 and was built with families and affordability in mind. Two blocks from Ikona and Fortuna, the developers turned the former Seville Hotel & Apartments into a beachside retreat, Fala Hotel, at 3020 Seville St. The closest Gzella to the beach, there’s a third-floor penthouse with a private balcony and surrounding views of the Atlantic Ocean and Intracoastal. The developers are introducing Mirra Hotel in 2018, nestled between the Ikona and Fortuna hotels.