

MIAMI



SOUTH BEACH

Miami sizzles in the sun, it sways at night with Cuban and Latin beats from the streets and a network of cool, chic clubs. Dressing up is an art and de rigeur to get into the hot night-spots, while beach lounging and sailing are the daytime activities of the younger set. Music seems to ooze from everywhere, like steam from a volcano of passion. Who cares what the old people do? They mostly stay inside in the God's Waiting Room or Club Dead that Florida has become for retirees and snowbirds from the north. But it really is a cultural crossroads.

Forgot the CBD, the real action happens on the beaches. **South Miami Beach** sprawls on the lower part of a barrier island and is the Art Deco capital of America with '30s and '40s hotels in rich pastels, nightclubs blaring salsa music and EDM, hot babes strutting the streets and shiny vintage cars cruising the boulevard with stereos blasting. **Miami Beach** and **North Miami Beach** are on a multi-island strip of hotels and retirement housing as well as rich suburbs stretching up to the broad beaches of **Fort Lauderdale**. And suburbia stretches west only a short distance to the edge of the **Everglades** swamps with an urban sprawl that envelops the city and is best bypassed.

The hippest little enclave is **Coconut Grove** to the south. Once the nest of



OUTDOORS AT LAGNIAPPE

hippies and pot dealers with an exquisite marina and groovy little shops, it's retained its alt edge and the Miami so many wish the city could be. But the Cuban immigrations of the '60s onward changed the pulse and heart of the city and gave it an edge that is sometimes dangerous but always sashaying in a rhythm.

Most people's impressions come from the seminal TV show *Miami Vice*, which pioneered TV's use of contemporary music in the mid-to-late '80s for youth appeal when the program followed the exploits of two cops through cocaine wars, glitzy nightclubs, smuggling rings with speedy boats and overloaded planes as well as mountainous cleavage and babes in stringy bikinis. Another impression of this South Florida fairyland came from the tunes of Jimmy Buffet, who was a habitu  of the interconnected islands of the Keys, terminating in colourful and hip **Key West**.

A word about Key West here, it's almost a suburb of Miami though it's located 240 kilometres away, a three-hour cruise that is two-thirds bridges and islands and one-third flatlands and swamps. But at the end is a sultry, laid-back town where you can watch lush sunrises and sunsets from the docks, mingle with a wild collection of zanies and sing 'Margaritaville' until you're hoarse.

While Gloria Estefan and her Miami Sound Machine are the most visible Cubano artists, along with Julio Iglesias, Jon Secada, Celia Cruz and Ricky Martin, the city also spawned the Queen of Miami Soul and R&B Betty Wright, rappers Flo Rida and Rick Ross. It's always been a diverse mixing pot of genres and cuisines with the majorities Black and Latino.

The music gumbo shows in the club **Funky Biscuit** (303 Mizner Blvd, Boca Raton, funkybiscuit.com), which features touring New Orleans artists, jam bands, guitar-slingers, blues, roots and a Grate-



THE STAGE

ful Thursday devoted to The Dead. The food is a mix of Cajun, Western, pizza, wings and other junk food faves.

Speaking of Nawlins influences, a funky little dive in a converted house presents jazz, blues, folk, bluegrass and soul as well as a stellar array of food and wine. **Lagniappe House** (3425 NE Second Ave, Miami, lagniappehouse.com) is torpid and timeless every Tuesday to Sunday from 7pm to 2am.

The Stage (170 NE 38th St, Miami, the-stagemiami.com) slots squarely in the Design District combining caf -cool with contemporary music ambience. It's smoke-free with bottle service and low cover charges featuring national, local and semi-national touring artists in an open-air setting.

Having the fame of being Miami's oldest bar, **Tobacco Road** (626 S Miami Ave, tobacco-road.com) has a lot to live up to. It's been a speakeasy, gambling den, strip joint, gay haunt and blues bar since it started as a bakery with a secret door in the '30s. Music seven nights a week includes tributes to Grateful Dead, Steely Dan, Pink Floyd and others as well as top R&B and blues artists with a jambalaya of Nawlins luminaries too with side dishes of Texan Conjunto and Miami Funk. The food tends toward all you can eat BBQ and fried turkey.

From Limp Bizkit to Latin pop-rock, **Revolution** (100 SW 3rd Ave, Ft Lauderdale, jointherevolution.net) features rock in all its styles as well as showcasing rising local and regional bands. It's standing room only for the 1300 bodies crammed in but there is a bottle service that will