




South Florida flair, clockwise from far left: Fort Lauderdale Beach, NSU Art Museum's shop, street style, and The Floridian's Fat Cat breakfast. Opposite: A little red Las Olas Boulevard Corvette.



FORT LAUDERDALE'S WHITE-sand beaches have long attracted sun-seeking revelers, but the city's fusion of art, culture, and old-Florida charm gives travelers more to look forward to than tans. Ocean-to-table menus thrive at restaurants scattered throughout neighborhoods such as Las Olas and Sailboat Bend, and its sparkling stretch of coastline is one of the state's prettiest. More cruisers than spring breakers visit today: Fort Lauderdale is home to the world's second-largest cruise port – as many as eight ships at once dock in Port Everglades, including Royal Caribbean's *Harmony of the Seas* and, come later this year, Crystal Cruises' *Serenity* and *Symphony*. Before (or after) setting sail, here's how to spend a day exploring by bike, aboard a boat, and on foot.

 **9 AM:** Start the day with breakfast at **The Floridian** – aka “The Flo” – a kitschy Fort Lauderdale institution open since 1937. Dig into a savory huevos rancheros wrap or go big and order the Fat Cat breakfast for two, which comes with a New


Sunshine State of Mind

Fort Lauderdale trades spring break for sophistication.

BY GINA VERCESI PHOTOGRAPHY BY VANESSA ROGERS

York strip steak, eggs, potatoes, biscuits, and a bottle of Dom Pérignon.

 **10 AM:** Downtown Fort Lauderdale's vibrant hub is Las Olas, a wide boulevard lined with family-owned boutiques and fine-art galleries. Find colorful resort-chic attire at **J.McLaughlin** and Italian-inspired menswear at **Moda Mario**. Good news: Most of the galleries here ship art-work worldwide, so browse freely at venues such as **Las Olas Fine Arts**, which features contemporary works from more than 40 painters, sculptors, and photographers.

 **11 AM:** Just off Las Olas, walk two blocks down Southeast Ninth Street to the New River and catch the **Fort Lauderdale Water Taxi** for a cruise through the canals that gave the city its "Venice of America" moniker. Part useful transportation mode, part voyeuristic adventure, the boat employs a first mate who shares stories about the famous owners of the million-dollar yachts and homes that line the waterways.




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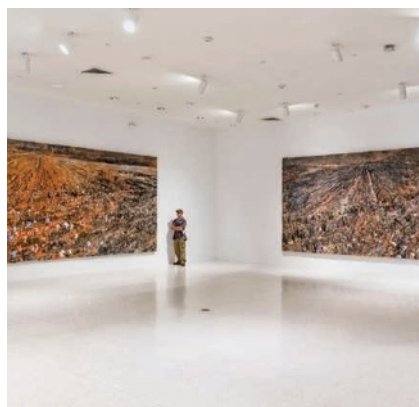

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Port of Call



Clockwise from top left: A Cuban sandwich and coctel at Burlock Coast, colorful trunks at J. McLaughlin, NSU Art Museum, a pet-friendly perch on Las Olas Boulevard, Bubbles + Pearls, and the Bonnet House Museum & Gardens.

Hop off at stop nine for a glimpse of old Florida at the **Bonnet House Museum & Gardens**, the former winter retreat of artist Frederic Clay Bartlett and his wife, Evelyn. Be sure to meander through its tropical gardens – a pair of wild Costa Rican squirrel monkeys roam the grounds.

2 PM: Grab a bright-yellow bike from the city's B-Cycle bike-share program (there's a kiosk on the corner of Sunrise and Ocean boulevards, a quick walk from the Bonnet House), and pedal ten minutes south to The Ritz-Carlton, Fort Lauderdale for lunch at **Burlock Coast Seafare & Spirits** – drop your bike at the Sebastian Street kiosk on the way. The oceanfront terrace is an ideal spot to enjoy the restaurant's signature Cuban sandwich and one of its craft *cócteles* that nod to the Prohibition era. After lunch, while away an hour lounging on Fort Lauderdale's soft sand – several local outfitters rent chairs and umbrellas right on the beach.

4 PM: Spend the afternoon exploring the **Riverwalk Arts & Entertainment District**, a picturesque stretch a ten-minute drive inland that's home to the Museum of Discovery & Science, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society, Historic Stranahan House Museum, and its crown jewel, the **NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale**. Director Bonnie Clearwater has helped shift the city's art-world status from Miami stepchild to prominent player. Permanent collections and rotating exhibits spotlight pivotal works from painters such as Andy Warhol and Frank Stella.

6 PM: At happy hour, take a ten-minute taxi ride to neighboring Wilton Manors, where former *Top Chef* contestant Josie Smith-Malave's recently opened **Bubbles + Pearls** awaits with Champagne and oysters. The decor is just as decadent as the bubbly: Silver light fixtures hang from the ceiling, bright metal stools line the bar, and lavender walls feature a rotating display of local art. Dinner options include blistered shishito peppers with miso and ahi tuna poke, and rib eye with kale, pesto, and cauliflower puree. Save room for one more glass of prosecco and chef Smith-Malave's blissfully tart key lime pie.



Fort Lauderdale Water Taxi views and (left) commentary courtesy of the boat's first mate.



SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Set sail from Fort Lauderdale or settle in for a bit longer.

CRUISE Island-hop on **Royal Caribbean's** 4,074-passenger *Allure of the Seas* during an eight-day round-trip-from-Fort Lauderdale sailing that visits Cozumel, Jamaica, and Labadee, Haiti. *Departures: Multiple dates, May 21 through August 13; from \$748.*

Princess Cruises' ten-day, New York City-to-Fort Lauderdale voyage on the 3,560-

passenger *Regal Princess* includes six at-sea days, plus stops in Bonaire, Sint-Maarten, and Antigua. *Departure: October 26; from \$899.*

Head to the Amazon River on a round-trip-from-Fort Lauderdale journey on **Crystal Cruises'** 1,070-passenger *Crystal Serenity*. The 25-day trip calls on Saint Bart's, Brazil, and more. *Departure:*

October 27; from \$5,895.

STAY A recent renovation to the 192-room ocean-front **Ritz-Carlton, Fort Lauderdale** added an updated spa and new boutiques in the lobby. Both its poolside café and Burlock Coast Seafare & Spirits are favorites of hotel guests and locals. *Doubles from \$349, including breakfast daily and a \$100 hotel credit. VI*

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