

what kind of  
**florida**  
 suits you?

of course the sunshine is its big draw, but america's southeastern peninsula offers much more than just a day at the beach. whether you want adventure or laid-back romance, florida has something for everyone

BY BOB COHN



Above: Pirates on patrol

**family fun**

Every Ritz-Carlton has friendly and helpful staff members whose job it is to cater to guests' whims, needs and desires. But only The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island has a talking macaw on call.

Amelia's Treasure, the property's 2-year-old feathered mascot, is a symbol of the pirate history that suffuses Amelia Island, a 13-mile-long seaside retreat off Florida's northeast coast.

Kids love Amelia's Treasure and her "pirate master," Luis Aury, and that's the point. This is one of the most kid-friendly resorts anywhere. Together, pirate and parrot host a Pirates Toast in the Lobby and visit the kids in their rooms for a Pirate Tuck-In, bringing milk and cookies along with a few tall tales of the sea. From November to May, they host Bonfires on the Beach, where guests enjoy more pirate stories, along with hot chocolate and s'mores.

Seasonal activities at The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island include kayaking, surfing and surf fishing lessons, and nature

tours and hikes. At historic Fort Clinch, guests can gather sharks' teeth during the day and turn them into necklaces at night. The Ritz Kids Program and Our Space teen lounge feature organized activities, and there is a game room where adults are specifically instructed to "keep out."

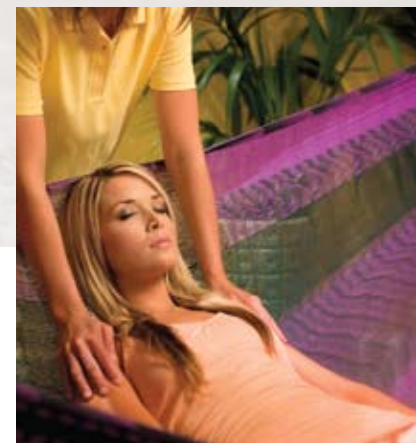
don't miss

**HISTORICAL GUIDED TOURS:** Visit a Southern cotton plantation, a Civil War fort and a Victorian seaport village, among other attractions.

**AMELIA ISLAND CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE:** This vintage-auto show, March 13-15, features more than 250 classics from all over the world.

**A SEAT IN THE KITCHEN:** Enjoy cozy, private dining behind glass in the kitchen of the renowned Salt restaurant. Order from a customized menu, talk to the chef and even pitch in if you like.

**HEAVEN IN A HAMMOCK (SPA):** Experience a virtually weightless massage through this incredibly relaxing and creative body therapy.



**RECONNECT PACKAGE:** Starts at \$269 per night. Includes \$40 resort credit per night and breakfast for two at Café 4750.

**viva italia!**

Ever been to actor George Clooney's Italian villa on Lake Como? That's OK, neither have we. But this is a lot more fun and practical, providing the same architectural and artistic ambience without the hassle of traveling halfway around the world and dealing with ill-tempered security guards.

Upon entering The Ritz-Carlton Coconut Grove, Miami, guests are greeted by rose sculptures and cathedral ceilings, marble floors and Venetian stucco columns, and a 40-foot picture window that looks out on a cascading waterfall. Modeled after the northern Italian, 16th-century-style landmark Villa Vizcaya, built in 1916 (which is just down the street), the hotel provides a uniquely personalized experience. Small (115 rooms) and intimate, it's a true gem in The Ritz-Carlton family. Italian music is played throughout the day, from pop to Verdi, Puccini and Vivaldi — the *Grand Tre*.

The setting is the oldest and most historic neighborhood in Miami. In the 1950s, Coconut Grove turned into an artists' colony, and it retains that influence today. It's a delightfully funky, eclectic neighborhood with bookstores and art galleries, lots of side streets with boutique shopping, and places to sit inside or outside and enjoy a beverage. In other words, it's a little bit of everything.

coconut grove

don't miss

**BESPOKE WEDDINGS:** Culture, heritage and traditions of the wedding couple are incorporated into the décor, ceremony and reception.

**TANDEM FACIAL & PEDICURE (SPA):** Double your pleasure with two therapists working together on face and feet, with arm and leg massages thrown in for good measure.

**WINE IS FUN ... PERIOD!** This monthly wine dinner at Bizcaya includes a five-course dinner, wine pairings and five-card-stud poker, with prizes for the winning hands.

**LOBBY LOUNGE:** The only upscale live music lounge in Coconut Grove.



**RECONNECT PACKAGE:** Starts at \$329 per night. Includes \$20 spa credit, breakfast for two at Bizcaya and daily valet parking.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLAUDIA URIBE  
PIANO PHOTOGRAPHY BY KONSTANTIN SUTYAGIN/DREAMSTIME.COM

**new kid on the canal**

Immortalized in the 1960 movie *Where the Boys Are*, Fort Lauderdale is now where The Ritz-Carlton is. This new property opened in August and resembles a classic, old-time luxury cruise ship with its oversize chandeliers, white marble and glass, and its many murals, including a 13-foot-high seascape featuring King Neptune.

Located about 25 miles north of Miami, Fort Lauderdale is becoming known as an emerging destination for active couples. With its 300 miles of navigable inland waterways, the city is known as the Venice of America. There are no gondolas (sorry), but you can explore its 500 canals by water taxi (for just \$13 you can get on and off all day) and other forms of transport, and check out the luxury homes and the wide array of restaurants, bars and shops.

Fort Lauderdale always has something going on, but its varied nightlife and seven-mile-long beach offer a more relaxed, less-crowded alternative to its more famous and glitzy neighbor, South Beach. It also appeals to outdoorsy types. Guests have exclusive hotel access to the private Grand Oaks Country Club, which is where the classic comedy *Caddyshack* was filmed. We are happy to report that the grounds here are now gopher-free.

Here in the Yachting Capital of the World, many water-sports options lie within easy reach: Boating, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, scuba and snorkeling are all minutes away.

fort lauderdale



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLAUDIA URIBE

don't miss



**CERO:** Enjoy ocean views and outdoor dining with a focus on fresh seafood and local ingredients.

**INTUITIVE OCEAN TREATMENT (SPA):** This multi-sensory treatment uses aromatherapy for a five-element (metal, earth, water, wood and fire) healing experience and "energy-balanced" anointing.

**THE WINE ROOM:** Separated from the Lobby Bar by translucent glass, it features 5,000 wines and a rare Scotch collection.

**TROPICAL POOL DECK:** It's huge (29,000 square feet), with an infinity pool and a 60-seat bar and grill. And it all overlooks the Atlantic from its unique, seventh-floor location. You feel like you're on the balcony of a cruise ship.

**RECONNECT PACKAGE:** Starts at \$514 per night. Includes \$90 resort credit per night and breakfast for two at Cero.

# key biscayne

## island getaway

As the destination for 10 million tourists annually, Miami has more than a few hotels and resorts. But The Ritz-Carlton, Key Biscayne is the only one with an entire island to itself, an island so beautiful it is said that Ponce de León delayed his search for the Fountain of Youth just to hang out here for a while.

With the resort's tropical gardens, ocean views and the only South Florida beach ranked in Dr. Beach's *Top 10 Beaches in the United States* (are you going to argue with a guy named Dr. Beach?), seclusion never sounded so good. The tennis center is the largest of any Ritz-Carlton property in the world. It's hardly remote, however; the glitter of South Beach, the Art Deco architecture, and the bright lights and big-city life are less than about 30 minutes away.

It's the best of both worlds.

Once famously (or infamously) known as the Florida home of U.S. President Richard Nixon, the identity of Key Biscayne is now one of recreation. Ninety percent of the island is state park land. Just 300 feet off Top 10 honoree Crandon Beach is the world's largest underwater seagrass meadow and the tip of the world's third largest coral reef. Kayaking, snorkeling, paddle-boating and Hobie Cats will give you an up-close look.

**TENNIS CENTER:** The largest tennis complex of any Ritz-Carlton in the world, this was designed by resident pro and tennis great Cliff Drysdale.

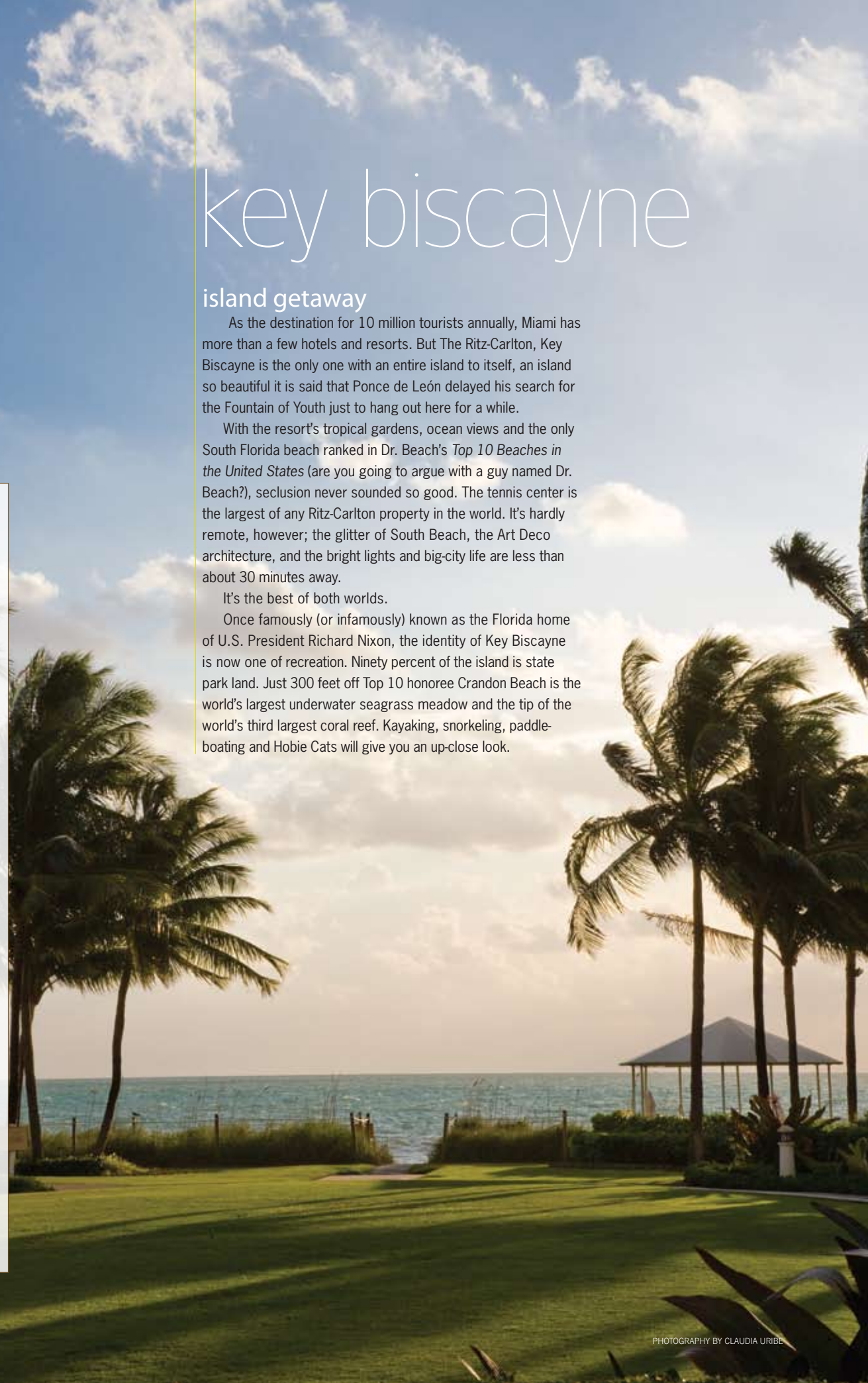
**CANTINA BEACH:** Here's ocean-front dining, Baja Mexico style. The Mexican Consulate here has rated Cantina Beach among the most authentic restaurants in the United States for Baja style. It has its own tequilier, who makes recommendations from 85 high-end, 100-percent agave tequilas. Dangerous.

**RUMBAR:** Opened last year, this is one of the best live-music venues in the area for Latin jazz. It recalls vintage Havana in its heyday.



**CIOPPINO MOONRISE DINNERS:** Stargaze from tabletop telescopes with the help of the Constellation Connoisseur.

**RECONNECT PACKAGE:** Starts at \$599 per night. Includes \$130 resort credit per night and breakfast for two at Cioppino.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLAUDIA URIBE

# naples

## back to nature

Given how hard it is to hide great beaches, an infinite variety of wildlife on vast land reserves, and a little swamp called the Everglades, the natural beauty of Naples and its environs was hardly a secret. Yet many outsiders knew Naples mainly as "that Florida town named for a city in Italy, for some reason."

No longer. Word is out, and part of the reason is The Ritz-Carlton, Naples, which opened in 1985 and helped introduce the area to tourists. Not only does the hotel attract those whose interests lie in exploring the great outdoors, it has become part of the unique environment.

Over the years, the hotel has evolved from catering not only to couples but to families as well. And the activities for kids are wholly unique. Led by a team of certified naturalists and created to promote awareness of and respect for Florida's natural beauty, the Nature's Wonders program provides an unparalleled experience.

Guests can visit the 10-tank aquarium that features two touch tanks (meaning you can hold the alligators, turtles, octopus and even a jellyfish if so inclined) and experience several eco-friendly activities with names such as "Marine Encounter," "Predators of the Sea" and "Butterflies and Blooms." Attractions also include a theater, a hands-on laboratory, learning stations and a variety of field trips to the Naples Zoo and the untamed wilds.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KYLE GEORGE/AURORA/GETTY IMAGES

## don't miss

**VUE (VIRTUAL USER EXPERIENCE):** In this brand-new lounge, adults can act like kids. It's a game room on steroids, with gaming systems, giant monitors and all sorts of other electronic and computer gizmos.

**ECO-ROOM (SPA):** Everything is organic, including bamboo sheets and towels. Two signature treatments are the Eco-Luxe Facial and the Eco-Luxe Cocoon body wrap, which uses algae and seaweed.



**SUNSET AT GUMBO LIMBO:** Enjoy warm Gulf breezes and dazzling sunsets while dining on the new, expanded boardwalk right on the beach. Every table has a view of the Gulf.

**CLASSIC COCKTAIL MENU AT THE GRILL:** Return to the classics with a new cocktail menu featuring some of the old standbys, including the French 75, Rialto and Sidecar.

**RECONNECT PACKAGE:** Starts at \$675 per night. Includes \$180 resort credit per night and breakfast for two at The Terrace.



# naples golf

## when in naples ...

Located between the Gulf of Mexico and the Everglades, Naples has world-class beaches and enough wilderness and wildlife to program a cable channel. But to a certain type of nature lover, the great outdoors essentially means 18 tees and 18 greens, and miles of fairway in between.

Naples has golf courses, too. Lots of them. With reputedly more holes per capita than anywhere on Earth, the city bills itself as "The Golf Capital of the World." It also provides the ideal setting for The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples.

Located on the resort's grounds is Tiburon, a 36-hole course designed by golf legend Greg Norman. There is a Gold Course, a Black Course (guests alternate between the two), five tee boxes per hole and no conventional rough or bunkers. Easy, right? Forget it. Every December, the PGA Tour stops here with the Merrill Lynch Shootout. The course has been designated as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, so you get your nature walk whether you want it or not.

A complimentary swing analysis is available each week. But for those bent on serious improvement, the Rick Smith Golf Academy will tear down your game and rebuild it, better than ever. Smith, one of the top instructors in the world, has worked with Phil Mickelson, Lee Janzen and other top pros.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MALCOLM HANES/ETSA/CORBIS

## more than roller coasters

Hey, guess what? Orlando is for grown-ups, too.

Despite its reputation as the center of the theme-park universe, Florida's largest inland city is no Mickey Mouse locale when it comes to professional sports, theaters, museums, great restaurants and shopping.

With its parks and preserves, abundant wildlife and scenic waterways, the area also has a diverse natural beauty and a shared mission to preserve and protect the environment. With that in mind, The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes offers several unique features. Even the golf course is Audubon certified.

Grande Lakes Outfitters offers private, guided Eco-Tours and the Eco-Journey, kayak and canoe trips on Shingle Creek, which winds through a major recreation preserve. Starting in March, one-day kayak tours will be available. Along the way, guests can observe bald eagles, alligators, barred owls and other wildlife in its natural habitat. The scenery is spectacular. Ritz Kids activities include the Butterfly Gardens, Fish Feedings and Lady Bug Release, and guests also can take self-guided nature walks.

Also in March, the very first G. Loomis fly-fishing school in the world will open here. Programs feature a two-day school, a variety of fishing excursions and private lessons. All aspects of fly-fishing will be covered, and instruction will be tailored to the specific needs of the guests.

# orlando



## don't miss



### CADDIE CONCIERGE PROGRAM:

From before tee-off to after the round, every need of the golfer is tended to, including club recommendations, advice, strategy, the history of the course and dinner reservations. They'll even cool you down with ice-cold towels soaked in rum and lime juice.

### CITRUS-INSPIRED TREATMENTS

**(SPA):** Did you know that smelling oranges actually makes you feel better? Experience the many health benefits of citrus.

### SEPARATE KIDS CHECK-IN:

Kids sign in for themselves and get various goodies and free ice cream during their stay.

### CHEF'S TABLE:

Sit right in the banquet kitchen behind a glass window, talk to the chef, and help cook if you want while you order from a customized menu.

### RECONNECT PACKAGE:

Starts at \$249 per night. Includes \$70 resort credit per night and breakfast buffet for two at the Vineyard Grill.

## the palm beach mystique

Money might not grow on trees, but it does sprout from coconuts.

In 1878, the Spanish brigantine *Providencia*, bound from Trinidad to Spain, ran aground on an island off the Florida coast during a storm. Its cargo of 20,000 coconuts was sold to the locals, and within 10 years there were 350,000 palm trees along the coast. Palm Beach had a name.

It wasn't long until railroad magnate Henry Morrison Flagler built the Royal Poinciana Hotel in 1894, the largest and grandest resort in the world. Inspired by that and Flagler's own 55-room mansion, by the turn of the 20th century Palm Beach had become the playground of the rich and famous, the winter home of wealthy Gilded Age industrialists and tycoons who earned vast fortunes and then proceeded to spend them.

Since then, the status, stature and mystique of Palm Beach have only expanded. Entertainers and politicians started sharing the playground with business types. The restaurants, nightlife and shopping, the golf and tennis venues and the infinite variety of water sports sprouted like all those palm trees. Today the sunny, beachy, upscale lifestyle endures, amid a younger, more vibrant population that has displaced the city's older image. Yet at the same time, Palm Beach itself has matured. Visitors enjoy abundant art, distinctive architecture and colorful history.

The Ritz-Carlton, Palm Beach captures it all. The ocean can be seen from the moment you walk into the Lobby, which, with its coral, shells, mirrors and rich fabrics, resembles the living room of a Palm Beach estate. A unique feature is the Resort Turndown. As it gets dark, the firepit on The Terrace comes to life, and lanterns and scented candles are illuminated. At the same time, each room is turned down in similar fashion (absent the fire, of course). The lights go down, the music comes on. The mystique endures.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLAUDIA URIBE



palm beach

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLAUDIA URIBE

### don't miss

**SELF-CENTERED GARDEN (SPA):**

This is a peaceful and quiet spot (except for the tinkle of wind chimes), and water is everywhere. Garden Butlers walk through, offering refreshments, as guests sit with their backs to a heated waterfall that massages neck, back and shoulders, or relax in hanging chairs dangling over an ankle-deep pond.

**AQUANUTS AND COAST KIDS PROGRAMS:**

For children, the Ritz Kids program at AquaNuts, our one-of-a-kind clubhouse, features a variety of supervised physical and creative activities designed especially for children ages 5 to 12, and Coast offers a first-of-its-kind teen lounge for ages 13 to 17. Among many activities, these programs offer the younger set a rock-climbing wall, Spa treatments, the Sandcastle Theater (ages 5–12), and a deejay booth and video-production area (for the 13–17 crowd).



### don't miss



**BUSINESS CABANAS:** Can't leave work behind? This air-conditioned, indoor work room, decorated in bamboo and marble, has phone, wireless Internet, printer and big-screen TV. Right next door is an outdoor cabana for the family.

**FLAMES OF THE FIRE DESSERTS:** Try torching your own s'mores and enjoy Cream Puff Tic Tac Toe, served on an artist's palette.

**RECONNECT PACKAGE:** Starts at \$599 per night. Includes a \$140 resort credit per night and daily breakfast for two at Temple Orange.

## an artistic flair

Known as the foremost name of the American circus and the most notable resident in the history of Sarasota, John Ringling is equally famous in these parts as a builder and developer. But perhaps his most lasting legacy is that of patron of the arts.

You think we're clowning around? No way. The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art is Florida's *official* art museum, offering 21 galleries of European paintings, Cypriot antiquities, Asian art, American paintings and contemporary art. It shares the 66-acre estate on Sarasota Bay with the Ringling mansion, known as *Cà d'Zan* ("House of John"); Mable Ringling's Rose Garden; and, of course, the Ringling Museum of the American Circus.

Due in large part to the Ringling influence, Sarasota is now a haven of art and culture. So is The Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota, located just two minutes from the estate. The resort, whose exterior gardens and terraces borrow heavily from the Ringling museum, houses more than \$500,000 worth of original art, including paintings, sculptures and fountains. Guided tours are offered on Saturdays. Guests also can take a self-guided walking tour anytime they want, with assistance from a handy booklet that provides a map and detailed information on the resort's art and architecture.

Below: John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art

## don't miss

### IONIC CLEANSE FOOT BATH

**(SPA):** The foot bone's connected to — everything! Provides a full-body detoxification of all vital organs.

### POPCORN BISQUE (AT VERNONA'S):

Hold the butter. This popcorn is made of mango and crab, and the soup is poured on top.



### CA D'ZAN BAR & CIGAR

**LOUNGE:** Among the lounge's hickory wood, leather club chairs and cozy sofas, you, too, can be a circus magnate. Or pretend to be.

**THE GREEN FLASH:** No, it's not a superhero, but it's what you'll see from your perch on the Sunset Terrace as the sun melts into the Gulf of Mexico.

**RECONNECT PACKAGE:** Starts at \$399 per night. Includes \$150 resort credit per night and daily breakfast for two at Vernona's.



sarasota

## where the action meets the ocean

You've read about it. You've heard about it. Perhaps you've even visited. There is only one South Beach, and when we reference the word "bacchanalia," we mean it only as a good thing.

What once was farmland occupying the southernmost part of Miami Beach has evolved into one of the world's major fun spots, a favorite destination for those once known in simpler times as the "beautiful people." You can find them strolling here among the 23 blocks of trendy bars and restaurants, lavish mansions, Art Deco architecture and anything else you might legally desire.

The oceanfront Ritz-Carlton, South Beach is part of the scene, located on the famous Lincoln Road pedestrian promenade, smack in the middle of it all. But there's no velvet rope, no burly doorman to keep you out. All guests are treated like A-list celebrities. It houses South Beach's only oceanfront restaurant and is the only Ritz-Carlton property in the world with a resident deejay.

A restoration of the classic DiLido Hotel, which was designed by famed Miami Beach architect Morris Lapidus, The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach fits snugly into the landscape. In addition to his 1,200 buildings, including 250 hotels, Lapidus reputedly gave us the immortal words, "Too much is never enough." Which pretty much says it all for South Beach.

### don't miss

#### **RUNAWAY BRIDE AND GROOM**

**PACKAGES:** Three packages, "Table for Two," "I Only Have Eyes for You" and "Happily Ever After," let you elope in style, with no in-law interference.



**TANNING BUTLER:** It's the only one of its type anywhere (the name has been trademarked). Hunky pool guy hands out advice on sun protection and complimentary tanning products. He'll even help apply them to those, uh, hard-to-reach areas.

#### **ASTRO BALANCED MASSAGE (SPA):**

Offering personalized massage therapies based on your astrological sign. Sorry, Geminis — you don't get two for the price of one.

**THE DILIDO BEACH CLUB:** Believe it or not, this is the only oceanfront restaurant on South Beach. Chef de Cuisine Jeff McInnis presents "Sun Cuisine," dishes inspired by flavors from beach towns along the southern Mediterranean coast.

**RECONNECT PACKAGE:** Starts at \$599 per night. Includes a \$130 resort credit per night and breakfast for two daily at Bistro One LR.



south beach