



Two hot new hotels signal a new wave of cool for Miami

The city's luxe hotels, vintage shopping and great food impress
Lucie Greene

HURRICANE SEASON. It's a phrase I'd hitherto brushed aside clicking "add to basket" on my Miami flight, and continued to ignore while enthusiastically selecting "convertible" as a rental car. Now, trapped on the bridge to Miami Beach, windshield wipers going like the clappers and palm trees bent straining under the gale force winds, it's one I wish I'd taken more note of.

I'm here because Miami is said to be having a moment, a crossroads at the international jet set, fashion, and art crowd flock to the city. Hip hotel brands are moving here fast (Soho House just opened its Beach House on Collins Avenue, W Hotel recently opened a lavish 312-room hotel here, SIS is also set to open in 2012, a 142-room venture designed by Philippe Starck, including a second location for award-winning restaurant Bazaar by José Andrés.) They join the Delano and legendary Tides Hotel - both set in swish art deco buildings - which have put the city back on the map.

Then there's the art crowd. Art Basel has been staged here since 2003, and now galleries and new hot developments are springing up. (See the Design District, where among art galleries and directional furniture stores, Christian Louboutin and Maison Martin Margiela just moved in. Next, the area is set for a major boost as Cymbal developers tap award-winning Mexican architect Enrique Noriega to create a 35-story complex with new art gallery and hub of restaurants.)

I'm sure it's all glorious when coated in the usual 30 degree sunshine, but right now, as the radio blurs statements like "red alert" and "Eye of the Storm" and "Tropical Storm Nicole" (God, it's so bad, it actually has a name!) it's slightly obscured.

No matter. At least when I show up to the W Hotel, my abode for the next few days, it's all guns blazing inside. W South Beach is one of the latest additions to W's expanding offer (London is next.) It's the last new-build hotel permitted to open on the beachfront and when I step inside it is suitably modern, slick and lavish. There's Warhols, Damien Hirsts and Basquiats casually hung on the walls, all part of the owner's private collection.

Club music is buzzing in the background and there's a waft of floral scent in the air (the hotel has curated a soundtrack and branded atmospheric scents pump in to communal areas.) It's all very cool and as I'm shown my hotel room, situated on the 11th floor overlooking the ocean, I begin to relax.

I'm staying in a Wonderful Studio, the hotel's standard room, which has an impressive 265 sq ft to it, complete with lounge area, balcony, and giant bed, accessorized with black lacquer cabinets, retro ceiling-to-floor chandeliers, and sexy Danny Clinch photos on the wall. (For more of a splash, the hotel also boasts some fairly spectacular roof top megasuites complete with outdoor pools, panoramic views and hot tubs.)

I pump for a Gin and Tonic, loving the storm-induced seclusion, but head out eventually. Hit Design District hotspot Sea Martinez for Mediterranean tapas and there also check out newly opened Bardot, a nightclub nearby. The whole vibe at Bardot



Tip left: Soho House's Beach House. Above: the pool at the W

is like a retro 1960s speakeasy. Visitors can only enter from the back. There's no sign. It's all "Swingers" Los Angeles style with lounge chairs, rugs and lamps and vintage furniture. There's a live band that kicks off around midnight and I only manage to extract myself around 2am.

The next day the storm is still raging so there's only one thing for it: shopping. Miami, among the fashion crowd, is known as a hotspot for vintage clothing, particularly good designer vintage clothing (they swear its to do with the wealthy retirement-age population there. Designer cast-offs galore.)

With that in mind I visit C. Madeleine's, the legendary designer vintage store in North Miami Beach. It's a 30,000 sq ft vintage mecca with everything from couture Christian Dior, Nina Ricci furs, ball gowns, and every vintage swimwear (Tamura Mellon is a fan of its extensive vintage shoe collection.) I also

visit the Webster, a hip new concept store opened on Collins Avenue, which has seamlessly edited designer fashion for men and women, accessories and jewelry set over three floors. (The roof top bar is an afternoon cocktail hotspot, too.) That evening I eat in My Chow at my hotel for dinner - brilliant, as ever - and head to bed.

The next day, sunlight miraculously streams in to my room and it's all change. The storm has finished. I grab a few minutes of sunshine at W's large pool area (outdoor cabanas, decking, loungers. You get the picture: total pool party decadence.) The convertible also finally enjoys its day in the sun with a drive to the main South Beach area to check out the Art Deco district. I check out the infamous Villa, by Baron G, the recently re-launched hotel situated in the landmark house owned by Gianni Versace. The Villa is closed to the public but Versace acolytes can go for dinner. (Note: Not for fans of minimalism.)

Later on I drive up to Soho Beach House where brunch is in full swing. It's slightly removed from the main South Beach area, but already looks set to be a bit of a summer hub for its members with a roof terrace furnished in four-poster day beds and pool housed in a con-

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The W Hotel Miami's relaxation spaces.



verried 1920s building. (It's members only but visitors can dine in Cecconi's, the club restaurant, which has a great terrace at sea level, complete with sit-up bar and fairy lights at night.)

I also revisit the Design District. I spend the afternoon here wondering round Thomas Maier's hip concept store

and Marni (Maitardi, an outdoor sofa lounge restaurant and bar looks fab for cocktail hours). And swing by Miami's nearby famed gallery Oh Wow.

Miami is warming up to Art Basel again this December and already it's looking set to be bigger than ever. This year more than 250 leading galleries from all over the world are taking part, showing works by more than 2,000 artists. Highlights will include a specially-designed Oceanfront exhibition space, designed by architects Phu Hoang and Rachely Rotem. And, thankfully, by then, hurricane season will be over.

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MIAAMI | Need to Know

STAY: W South Beach. Rooms from £290. 2201 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, Florida 33139 (305) 938-3000. www.w-hotels.com/SouthBeach

EAT: Cecconi's Miami Beach. 4305 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, FL 33140. +1 (786) 507 7902. www.southbeachhouse.com/cecconi/miami/

DRINK: Bardot. 3456 N Miami Ave. Miami, FL 33127-3534 (305) 576-5570. www.bardotmiami.com; Maitardi. 363 NE 39th St, Miami - (305) 572-1400. www.maitardi.com

SHOP: C Madeleine's. 13702 Biscayne Blvd, North Miami Bch - (305) 945-7770. www.cmadeleines.com; The

Webster. 1220 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, FL 33139 (305) 674-7899. www.thewebstermiami.com

VISIT: Oh Wow. 3100 NW 7 Avenue, Miami, Florida 33127 (305) 433 9345. www.oh-wow.com

STAY TUNED FOR: Art Basel in December

TRAVEL NOTES | by Timothy Barber



Above, Hotel Crillon in Brive in Provence.

Truffle hunting in Provence
 France's black Périgord truffle is one of the most wonderful ingredients known to man, and it's in season. Provence's enchanting Hotel Crillon in Brive is offering guided truffle hunting and a tasting visit to Chateau-neuf-du-Pape from 11-14 and 25-28 November. £550 per person halfboard (two staying). www.crillonbrive.com

Soon-to-open Canal House in Amsterdam.

Amsterdam goes chic
 The Dutch capital is one of Europe's great cities, but it's not the best for cutting-edge hotels - until now. Canal House, the third hotel from Curious Hotels (the group behind Gloucestershire's luxurious Cowley Manor) brings sexy interiors and cosy urban cool to three ancient converted canal-side houses. It opens in a month. Rooms from £240 per night. www.curioushotels.com

Alternative accommodation
 Sometimes hotels can seem less than compared to a proper home. SwapMyCityPad is an online service for people around the world to list their homes and swap with other subscribers when travelling (it doesn't have to be a direct swap). The site's real winner is the fact that all you need pay is an annual subscription of £3999. Perfect for cost-cutting times. www.swapmycitypad.com

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