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(Blue Guide)

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Miami Beach today is a city of ~~40,000~~^{54,000} year-'round inhabitants, recognized as one of the leading resorts of the world and able to accommodate comfortably nearly three times the number of its permanent population.

Geographically located just off the Florida mainland near the southeasternmost tip of the state, Miami Beach is almost entirely surrounded by water. On the east is the Atlantic ocean with the Gulf Stream some three miles offshore. On the west is Biscayne Bay. To the south stretches the chain of islands ^{that} ~~which~~ becomes known as the Florida keys. Northward, Miami Beach meets adjacent, smaller resort cities, all built on a comparatively narrow coastal strip separated by bays, lagoons, and inland waterways from the mainland.

The earliest recorded settlement on Miami Beach was started in 1567 by Don Pedro Menendez de Aviles. This settlement was designed as a mission to Christianize the Indians who inhabited the southeast Florida coast, and to serve as a port of call for the Spanish ships which at that time were busy on voyages of discovery and settlement in the New World.

This mission, like so many others attempted in South Florida, was doomed by the combination of Indian resistance and the discovery of gold and other riches in lands of Central and South America.

History leaves much unsaid for 200 years -- the 17th and 18th centuries -- in South Florida. The golden, sunswept beaches were here, the climate was warm and pleasant in winter and the lands cooled by steady ocean breezes in summer. But the United States then was a young, pioneering country. Its people had no time for vacations, had no way to travel long distances in comfort and with speed. It was not until the 19th century was one-third passed that southern Florida with its necklace of sub-tropical, pleasant islets became more than a hideout for pirates and privateers.

It was in 1837 that Dr. Henry Perrine obtained a grant of land in the Florida keys. Dr. Perrine, a noted botanist, started the first of several agricultural developments which marked the trend to be followed for three-quarters of a century in the upbuilding of southern Florida. The good doctor met disaster, however, at the hands of Indians. They massacred most of the people in his settlement at Indian Key, ^{75 miles south of Miami Beach,} including the botanist.

Modern history of Miami Beach begins in 1870, and is agricultural rather than tourist in nature. At that time, coconuts were bringing an unusually high price in New York, and two New Jersey men, Henry B. and Charles H. Lum landed at Miami Beach, where they saw coconut trees growing. The Lums immediately envisioned groves of coconut trees on Miami Beach and the riches the coconuts would bring them.

They returned to New Jersey, obtained financial backing and plunged into the development of a coconut plantation along the sands which now blossom with bright beach umbrellas and are thronged the year-'round with visitors. They again were pioneering. The closest real settlements in Florida were Key West and Jacksonville. It was hard work and labor was scarce.

By the time the Lums had planted their trees and the trees had begun bearing, the price of coconuts had dropped sharply. Their visions of wealth failed to materialize, but had the Lums known it, Miami Beach was nearly ready to become a city. It would not be many years before lofty hotels, beautiful homes and luxurious apartment buildings, smart shops, spacious theaters, churches and libraries would be rising amid their coconut groves.

With the coming of railroads and highways, cities on the South Florida mainland sprang into life. Residents of these cities became the first "tourists" to Miami Beach. It became the custom for them to come to Miami Beach by boat for week-end picnics and holiday swimming parties. Soon a bridge was built to span Biscayne Bay, and the new horseless carriage brought more visitors. By 1915 dozens of homes were under construction and the town of Miami Beach was organized.

The growth of Miami Beach since 1915 has been one of the outstanding sagas of municipal development in modern times.

The 30 freeholders of 1915 organized the town government, but two years later the population had grown to the extent the municipality was reorganized and the state legislature granted a charter for "The City of Miami Beach".

Three men were responsible largely for the real beginnings of Miami Beach. They were John S. Collins, J. N. and J. E. Lummus. Between them in the early days they owned most of the southern half of what is now the city. Collins began construction of the first bridge across from the mainland, a wooden structure that has long since been replaced.

Collins, however, ran into financial difficulties before the bridge was completed, and the Lummus brothers were not in the class of big capitalists. It was at this point that Carl G. Fisher stepped into the picture. Fisher, from Indianapolis, Ind., had become wealthy in the rapidly growing young automobile industry and spent a winter vacation in South Florida.

Here he saw Miami Beach and realized the vast possibilities for its development into a resort, and he threw his money behind it. Fisher's money completed the bridge which Collins started, dredged waterways, drained swamps and cleared more land. Streets and sidewalks were constructed and the beginnings made for the water distribution system and sewers.

Fisher stayed with Miami Beach, publicized it throughout the world. More people came for the winters, by train and by automobile. The 1920 census gave Miami Beach a population of only 644, but just five years later the population had grown to 15,000 and its assessed valuation had grown from \$224,000 to \$5,540,000.

In 1921 Miami Beach had only five hotels in operation and 12 apartment houses. In ¹⁹⁵⁰~~1948~~ the city building department issued permits for ^{nine}~~16~~ hotels to bring the Miami Beach total to ³⁷⁰~~357~~. At present more than a fourth the entire number of hotel rooms in Florida are in Miami Beach, plus some ^{16,000}~~13,000~~ apartment units.

The years 1923, 1924 and 1925 were years of boom in Miami Beach. The town in those three years took on the stature of a city, as well as being a city in name. Construction was started on several major hotels which even yet rank as landmarks. Radio Station WMBF was installed in the Fleetwood hotel, and WIOD launched its radio career with a broadcasting station on Collins island. Property values quadrupled and quadrupled again as Miami Beach took the front in soaring prices which marked the Florida real estate boom.

When the Florida depression came in 1926, followed by the national depression in 1929, real estate values declined. Where prices had been inflated, they sank to below their actual values. But Miami Beach led the way in recovery, and for the last two decades the building has been, while rapid, on a basis of sound business investment.

Miami Beach lacks the glamor of history, weather-worn cathedrals and the aura of quaintness which are the attractions of many resorts. It offers instead, the cleanliness, brightness and comfort of modern, up-to-the-minute buildings. Here the visitor may find what is new, not what is old, whether it be in clothing fashions, house fashions or yacht fashions.

"Everything looks so clean and fresh" is almost the invariable expression of the visitor seeing Miami Beach for the first time.

Eight miles of ocean beach form the eastern shoreline of the city. Much of this beach is open to the public, and it is estimated that some 2,000,000 swimmers a year lounge on its sands. The remainder of the ocean beach is semi-private, given over to hotels built along the shore and cabana clubs. An oddity is the fact that many of the ocean front hotels have their own swimming pools as well as beach, and that Miami Beach has more than ²⁰⁰~~100~~ pools despite the proximity of the ocean.

Much of the resort life centers around the cabana colonies, even as 40 years ago the people who came to Miami Beach to swim brought picnic lunches and built their holidays around parties on the beach. The basic appeal -- swimming and sunbathing -- has not changed at Miami Beach, it only has become more comfortable and convenient with the cabanas, pools and seaside dining rooms of today.

The city itself stands on 30 islands, most of them man-made and filled in from land dredged from Biscayne bay. Some 30 miles of waterways wind through the city, forming protected anchorages for small pleasure boats and smooth aquatic highways for yachtsmen and sightseeing excursion vessels. Most famous of these canals is Indian Creek, scene of Gar Wood's speed record trials when the Detroit sportsman and Sir Malcolm Campbell were battling for the world's speedboat record.

Guy Lombardo also used Indian Creek for his attempted record run and both he and Henry Kaiser, famous industrialist, are expected to go after the water racing crown again on Indian Creek.

Along the shores of Indian Creek are the homes of many prominent North Americans. One of the most famous estates along the waterway was owned by the late Harvey S. Firestone, automobile tire tycoon. The many-chimneyed Georgian Colonial Firestone mansion, set amid green lawns and bright flowers, may best be glimpsed from sightseeing boats on the creek.

St. Francis hospital, erected in 1925 at a cost of more than \$1,000,000, also adjoins Indian Creek. The hospital was built by James E. Allison, and after his death was turned over to the Order of St. Francis, now being operated by the sisters of that order. The hospital, a plain concrete and stucco building, occupies, with its grounds, six acres of the 33-acre Allison Island.

Three causeways now connect Miami Beach with the mainland. MacArthur causeway, near the southern end of Miami Beach, has bridges leading from it to Star, Palm, and Hibiscus Islands. These islands have many beautiful homes and on Hibiscus Island is the clubhouse of the Miami Beach Rod and Reel Club.

Venetian causeway spans the bay by way of the Venetian Islands, which are the site of numerous palatial residences and apartment buildings. At the northern end of Miami Beach the third causeway, flanked by additional islands, with more in the process of being filled in, leads from the mainland.

Much of the sightliness of Miami Beach is due to the planned development and strict zoning which has been followed throughout the city's growth.

Business areas, hotel and apartment areas and sections restricted to the building of single-family homes have prevented the intermingling of commercial enterprises in residential zones. The southern end of Miami Beach is devoted largely to business and hotel buildings.

In the central portion of the city are two shopping districts, one being the famous Lincoln Road and the other a section of smart shops on 41st Street. Near the north end of Miami Beach in the 71st Street area is the fourth shopping and business district.

Outstanding in style leadership is Lincoln Road. Some of the most famous stores in the United States have branch shops on the Road. The merchants pride themselves on being from three to six months ahead of New York or Chicago shops in the showing of fashions. This leadership is maintained because in Miami Beach the climate is such that spring and summer fashions can be worn here in winter months, while other parts of the country must wait for warm weather to permit such displays.

Lincoln Road is a wide street, lined by double sidewalks with grass plots and palm trees planted between. This winter the merchants, in cooperation with the city government, began a new beautification project. Flower beds have been prepared among the grass plots and the street will be filled with blossoms the year-'round. Lilies, for example, are planted so as to bloom at Easter, while poinsettias with their colorful red flowers, will lend a Christmas atmosphere in December.

Shopping is one of the great points of interest, particularly for the women, of Latin American visitors to Miami Beach. And the Latin American, as well as the resident of the United States, has come more and more to realize that Miami Beach is a pleasant city in which to spend a vacation, summer or winter. Thousands of people from Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia and other Central and South American countries, visited Miami Beach in the summer of 1948.

Because of this, practically all the better stores on Miami Beach employ clerks who can speak Spanish, so that it is easy for the Latin American who does not speak English to find his way about.

Aside from its famous beach, the city has many geographical attractions. The many waterways, five public parks and recreational areas and two municipal golf courses serve to prevent any look of crowding. Tennis and golf may be played the year-'round, just as swimming and boating may be enjoyed in June or January.

In outdoor recreation, many visitors to Miami Beach first choose fishing. A fleet of some 50 sports cruisers is available for charter and a day of trolling in the Gulf Stream can furnish plenty of thrills. Last year the Third International Light Tackle Sailfish tournament was held at Miami Beach, with the team representing the Sailfish and Tarpon Club of Mexico winning the prize trophy. Teams from Canada to Panama, including Puerto Rico and the Bahamas, competed.

The visiting fishermen, all of them experts in this sport, were lavish in their praise of Miami Beach and the caliber of boats and guides available here. In addition to sailfish, many other game fish may be caught, including blue and white marlin, tarpon, wahoo, dolphin, bonefish, snook, bonito and a score more.

Miami Beach visitors can find much of entertainment and interest at any season of the year. Football, which vies with baseball as the national game, brings many of the leading college teams to Roddey Burdine stadium in October, November and December. The football season reaches its conclusion with the annual, famous Orange Bowl game January 1. This game is between two of the outstanding college teams of the nation and is attended by 62,000 persons, the stadium seating capacity.

During the winter months, from November into April, racing attracts thousands of followers. There is one greyhound racing track in Miami Beach, three more in nearby communities. Three horse racing tracks are within a short distance of Miami Beach and some of the nation's finest thoroughbreds may be seen on these racing strips. Many two-year-olds get their first racing experience here, to go on to fame as they reach their full growth and best age.

Here too, the Latin American visitor during the winter months may watch the fascinating Spanish sport of jai-alai. Some of the top players of Cuba, Mexico, Spain and other Latin nations may be found nightly in the fronton.

Of night life, Miami Beach presents some of the best in dance bands and entertainers. Completed in the winter of 1948 at a cost of \$1,000,000 was one of the most lavish club-theaters in the United States. A dozen other clubs vie in the presentation of noted performers and famous orchestras for dancing. Many of the hotels also have dinner dancing nightly, frequently in outdoor patios open to the silver light of the moon.

The Latin American should feel at home dancing here. Miami Beach has adopted the rhumba, the conga and other Latin dances. Many clubs have orchestras which feature Spanish American music.

Because of its geographical location, Miami Beach considers itself at the cross-roads of the Americas. Capitals of every nation in Central and South America are within less than two days travel by the excellent air lines which serve the city. Similarly, all the large cities of the United States may be reached within 24 hours by air from Miami Beach. Railroads and good highways also fan northward from Miami Beach, offering excellent surface transportation to any part of the country.

Persons in Central and South America should inform themselves, when they consider visiting Miami Beach, of the differences in the seasons. The winter months of December, January, February and March find the largest crowds here. This is because persons living in northern parts of the United States like to come here to avoid the snow and ice of the northern winters. Spring and summer clothing may be worn in Miami Beach all the year, and seldom is a light topcoat or wrap needed.

Because the winter months comprise the "big season," it is during that time the clubs have their most lavish programs and the most luxurious hotels are opened. Hotel and apartment rates naturally follow the trend of big demand, and can not be obtained in winter at the bargain prices prevailing during other times of the year.

Many people, however, prefer Miami Beach in the spring or autumn. Hotel rates during these seasons are inexpensive and while social activity does not set the pace of winter, there still is plenty to do and see. Climate here in April and May particularly, is believed by many to be unexcelled anywhere. The days are long, sunshine prevails and the temperatures range in the mild seventies.

Spring blends gradually, imperceptibly into summer at Miami Beach, and when summer comes in June the only marked difference is the more leisurely tempo of life and the lack of the heavy automobile traffic of winter.

A majority of Miami Beach's Latin American visitors seem to prefer summer as the time to come to the city, and this feeling is being shared increasingly by residents of the States. Beginning as a winter resort, Miami Beach now is recognized as an all-year play land. Many of the hotels remain open the year-'round and the claim is made that a summer vacation at Miami Beach may be enjoyed in luxury on a more modest budget than anywhere else in the country.

Summer has its entertainment program too. First there is baseball, as there is elsewhere during summer in the United States. Fishing is unsurpassed in the blue Gulf Stream waters. Many of the smartest stores and shops remain open, allowing the visitor the same wide selections that are available at other times of the year. Golf and tennis, sailing and swimming are on the schedule for those who like the more active sports.

Miami Beach's summer temperature averages 81.2 according to official records of the United States weather bureau. Rare indeed is the day when the thermometer reaches 90 degrees, even when states 1,000 miles to the north are sweltering in temperatures of 100 and above.

This equable climate is due largely to the cooling effect of the waters around the city. Southeasterly trade winds prevail during the summer, blowing cool and clean into the land. Because of the absence of dust, pollen and smoke in the air, many people who are plagued with hay fever and similar allergies find relief in Miami Beach after fruitless searches elsewhere. It is because of this clean air, too, that Miami Beach hotels are white or light in color, adding so much to the general attractiveness of the city.

Miami Beach now can accommodate approximately 100,000 visitors in addition to the permanent population. Building, despite a scarcity of materials since the war, has gone forward at a rapid rate. In the last 25 years, more than \$200,000,000 in building has been certificated through the city's building division. This includes homes, apartments, hotels and public buildings such as schools, libraries, fire and police stations.

With such a record behind it, Miami Beach looks forward confidently toward the future. The year 1948 saw a record-breaking \$25,517,000 in building permits, more than half of which were for hotels and apartments. In 1949 building permits, while somewhat lower, still were exceeded by only one city in Florida and reached \$18,661,000. Nearly 250 homes were built in 1949, costing \$4,000,000. *In 1950 more than 300 homes were erected.*

~~New under construction is~~ the new municipal auditorium and convention hall *was* to be completed this ~~summer~~ *fall*. The auditorium will seat nearly 4,000 people and can be used for exhibits, theatricals and sports events as well as for conventions.

Municipal operations are keeping abreast of Miami Beach expansion. The city buys its water from the mainland, but distributes it through its own system of mains, and this system is being extended constantly.

Construction of new buildings is supervised carefully in order to assure public protection from fire and other hazards. Firemen say building and exit regulations, plus their fire prevention bureau inspections, are far ahead of many cities and that it is practically impossible at Miami Beach for hotel or night club fires to take the heavy toll of life that has occurred in several cities in recent years.

These things, plus the orderly, planned growth of Miami Beach, have served to keep the city both healthy and beautiful, and have maintained Miami Beach's reputation as one of the premier resorts of the world.