

Art Basel, private beaches and bags of bling: Miami's exclusive Bal Harbour is swiftly becoming the next style capital

On the hunt for high fashion, fine food and an even finer coastline? This luxurious hideaway provides a decadent sanctuary of sumptuousness for those heading to the Magic City for Art Week this season...

By Chandler Tregaskes

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BAL HARBOUR IS THE NEW MUST-STAY OF MIAMI

A palm tree-lined oasis where the deep-pocketed Silicon Valley set retreat from big tech in search of some much needed sandy respite; a sunny ocean-viewed paradise where New Yorkers escape from harsh winters in 'the city that never sleeps'; and a bustling design scene that hums throughout its neat rows of bubblegum pink bungalows and turquoise townhouses each December when Art Basel comes to town: **Miami** is so much more than the ultimate party destination – it's swiftly becoming a **style** capital, a sizzling resort sanctuary and a high culture haven all rolled into one.

It is famously where the most private of American private islands is found. Indian Creek - or 'Billionaire's Bunker' as locals so lovingly describe it - proudly provides a gated community for the likes of Jeff Bezos, who bought three houses beside each other just to avoid nosy neighbours; Tom Brady and Gisele Bündchen, who opted for adjacent post-divorce boltholes on either side of a canal so that they could ship their kids via boat during custody swaps; and First Daughter, Ivanka Trump, who chose to set up her family unit in waterfront bliss with investor husband, Jared Kushner. Oh yes, you're never more than a stone's throw away from someone with a bank account set to make your eyes water when visiting the Magic City.

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A VIEW FROM ABOVE OF THE ST REGIS RESORT, BAL HARBOUR

And they know how to spend it. On a short ride up from Miami International Airport in the back of a large-and-in-charge Tesla, my driver sets the tone for my rendezvous. ‘This is expensive,’ he says as he gestures towards Surfside, a particularly glitzy part of the North Beach area, ‘Where you’re going is exclusive,’ he confirms. It’s music to my ears and, indeed, a final destination of esteemed residence soon appears before me: **Bal Harbour**.

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It’s quickly evident that residents are all aware that this trendy enclave promises the loftiest heights of luxury available city-wide. When getting past the airport’s hawk-eyed staff earlier in the day, a TSA agent offers up a stifled ‘Oh wow, nice,’ when I explain my intended location for my short trip, and friends I meet along the way all seem to serve up a similar envious expression of ‘oh, really?’ when I confirm I’m a Harbourite for the weekend. Perhaps the Billionaire’s Bunker is on the out after all...



INSIDE THE GLOSSY INTERIORS OF THE ST REGIS ANTONIO CUELLAR PHOTOGRAPHY

My home-from-home for the duration is the **St Regis**, a towering resort befit with gilded accoutrements, its own private beach scattered with guests’ Dior totes strewn across sun loungers, and a constant aromatic hit of its **New York** sister’s former matriarch, Caroline Astor (otherwise known as the founding mother of American High Society). Pumped throughout its 27 floors where rooms such as mine can boast three separate balconies, the hotel’s own ‘Caroline’s 400’ *parfum* emits notes of the exotic woods that once lined her ballroom and her aptly dubbed favourite flower - American **Beauty** roses - in homage to the list of 400 patrons she deemed acceptable to attend her societal soirees during the Regency era. Here, you’ll find nothing too big of an ask from the spruced-up staff, with private Bentley-driving chauffeurs available all-day long, a state-of-the-art spa that sprawls across 14,000 square foot, and even a photo concierge should you wish to immortalise your stay with the fine art of professional photography. That’s right, you don’t even have to take your own selfies when residing at the St Regis.



OCEAN VIEWS AND ELEGANT FURNISHINGS

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But the area’s true gem lies across the road: Bal Harbour Shops. This year celebrating its 60th anniversary, this open-air-mall-turned-shopaholic’s-sanctum has been the ultimate port-of-call for rail-rummaging aesthetes for over half a century. It is here that its original developer Stanley Whitman convinced **fashion** tycoon Stanley Marcus to open up the first ever Neiman Marcus outside of Texas. Saks swiftly followed suit, and soon Cartier and Bulgari would cut the ribbon of their inaugural mall locations, with Louis Vuitton and Prada venturing outside of New York for the first time ever too. The precedent for glamour was set in stone, and to this day those tentpole purveyors of chic stand proud within its walls alongside the likes of **Chanel**, Fendi, **Gucci**, Miu Miu and many, many more. Think Bond Street with palm trees, tropical heat and even real-life turtles splashing around mini waterfalls. *Divine!*



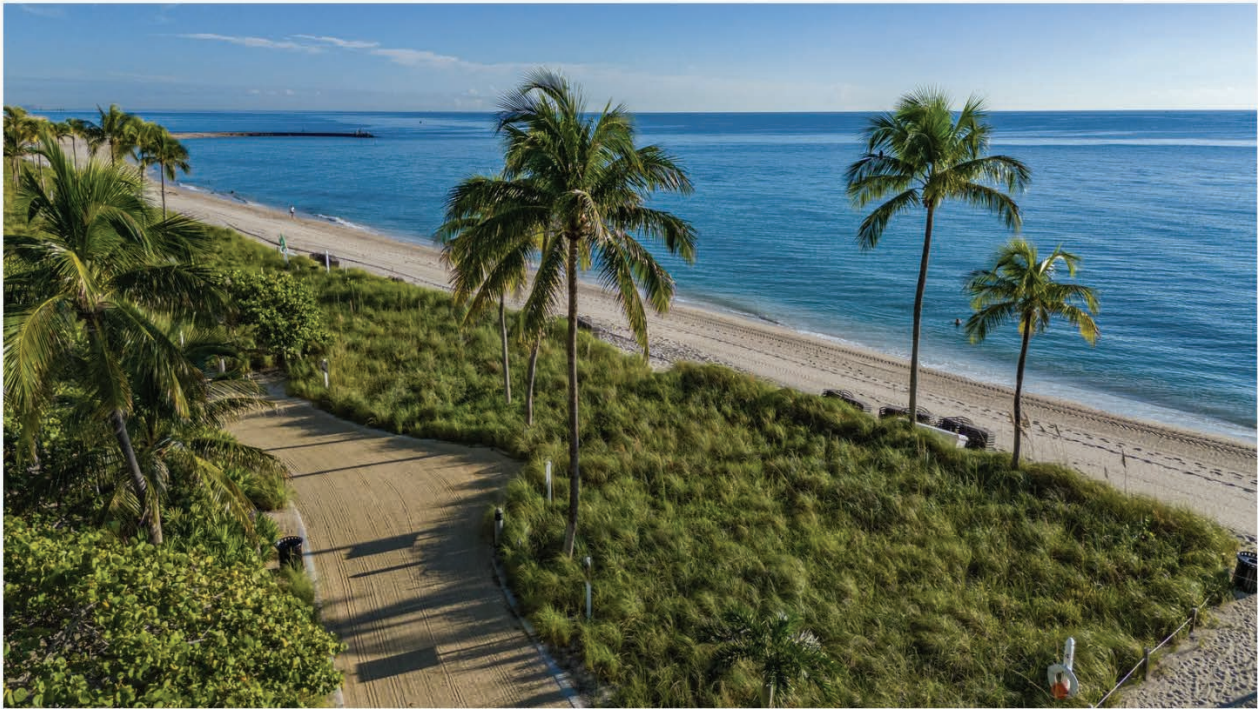
INSIDE THE OASIS OF STYLE AND FINERY AT BAL HARBOUR SHOPS DougCastanedo

Sounds like the ideal place to a while away a sun-drenched day, doesn’t it? And with ample eateries dotted between coveted couturiers, reenergising for round two of boutique-hopping has never been easier. Avenue 31’s Breton-striped parasols provide shelter and patisseries in the heart of the address; Carpaccio offers its namesake delicacy alongside lashings of decadent Italian delights; and Hillstone, with its dark lacquered wood and leather furnishings, oozes with slick Americana elegance with a vast fusion menu of sushi, steak and just about anything you can cook up on the grill. You won’t go hungry for food nor fashion when visiting Bal Harbour.

BAL HARBOUR

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AZURE WAVES LAP UPON THE GOLDEN SANDS OF THE REGION

Dazzling design doyennes looking for the perfect locale for Miami Art Week later this year will find a symphony of sun, style and opulence in the heart of Bal Harbour. Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack knew it some 70 years ago, regularly staying at the former Americana Hotel where the St Regis now glitters - and even Edie Beale finally found solace after years of squalor at Grey Gardens when she chose to live out the rest of her years in the postcard-perfect beach town. Just remember to pack a big enough suitcase - you certainly want to bring a little Bal Harbour magic home with you. Heavy luggage fees not included.