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Photo provided by InterContinental Miami Website

A WEEKEND TO REMEMBER: PLANNING THE PERFECT MIAMI GETAWAY

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One of the best parts about where we live is the ease of access to every part of the state. Yes, Brevard's beaches are beautiful; however, as Florida has so much to offer, it's important to take a weekend trip every now and again. I personally love getting in the car and discovering new parts of the state I have called my home for 23 years.

I recently took a weekend getaway to Miami and was completely blown away by all that the downtown area had to offer. Miami is known for its beaches and nightlife, both of which have been depicted in film and tv for decades. But Miami is quickly growing to be much more. As someone who has traveled to Miami countless times over the years, I was surprised to discover new parts of the city that I had never seen – or heard of – before.

Living luxuriously

During my trip, I stayed at the InterContinental Miami. Known around the world for its luxurious amenities, the InterContinental Miami was as breathtaking as I'd hoped. Located in the heart of Downtown Miami, this hotel has everything you need for a weekend away. The hotel towers over Biscayne Bay, so those with a bay-front room have the pleasure of waking up to a beautiful Miami sunrise over the water. For those who don't have a view of the Bay, don't fret; out your window is the infamous Miami cityscape.

But what I loved most about the hotel was its architecture. The InterContinental's walls are constructed from marble mined from the same quarry as the Sistine Chapel, and the hotel was built around Henry Moore's 18-foot, 70-ton Spindle sculpture – which is also made of marble – that sits in the center of the hotel's lobby.

Also located in the lobby are three different restaurants, including the infamous Pan-Latin Steakhouse, Toro Toro. During my stay, I was lucky enough to participate in a cooking class lead by the restaurant's head chef. Here, he helped us make two different appetizers, and while my plating was lackluster – I won't quit my day job – the taste was incredible. After this, the staff guided my group back to the main restaurant and fed us until our hearts and stomachs were full.

Both the food and the atmosphere were unforgettable. My favorite part of the dinner was the dessert: La Bomba Clasica. The dessert is a chocolate sphere filled with cream cheese mousse, dulce de leche & strawberry ice cream, fresh berries, almond cookie crumbs, caramel and vanilla and berry sauces. Think of this dish as part dessert, part performance art. Your server will put cellophane down on your table, and will drop the dessert onto the cellophane, letting the chocolate and fruity insides fall where they may.

A new metropolis

As previously stated, the InterContinental is in the heart of downtown Miami. A quick Uber ride will take you to Museum Park. Located on the other side of Biscayne Bay, this park is home to the Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science and the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM). At the Frost, you have the opportunity to pet stingrays, admire sharks and observe a variety of wildlife including owls and snakes. You can also visit the planetarium and learn all about our expansive universe.

A few short steps away is PAMM, one of the country's most Instagrammable museums. Here, while palm trees, crystal blue waters and high-rises are the views outside, the inside is its own world, full of colorful, complex and tasteful modern art. If it weren't for those signature palm trees, it would be easy to forget that you were in Florida, and not one of the north's major metropolitan areas.

Apart from its galleries, this 200,000



Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM)

square foot museum has its own restaurant, so you don't have to travel too far to have a relaxing lunch break. I recommend sitting outside if possible, as the view is hard to beat.

Cosmopolitan experience

On our last evening, we took an uber ride over to Brickell City Centre. To describe this place as a shopping center would be to seriously reduce its size and scale. Here, you can find luxurious shopping, dining, apartments and office space. This is very much what I picture heaven to look like.

At Brickell City Centre, I participated in La Cucina Hands-On Neapolitan Pizza Workshop at La Centrale Italian Food Hall. It was everything I could have anticipated a pizza class to be.

When we arrived, they very quickly poured each of us a glass of wine and let us relax at the family-style table while we waited for the chef to arrive. Once he did, we grabbed our aprons, and carefully watched and listened as he walked us through how to build our own pizzas. While the pizza was excellent, this class only reinforced what I learned at Toro Toro: not to quit my day job.

Brickell City Centre is close to many of Miami's famous districts, one being Wynwood. If you haven't experienced the art, food and nightlife Wynwood has to offer, I cannot recommend this area enough.

I won't lie, it was hard to come back after such an incredible weekend away. Though I was able to fit in a lot of sightseeing, there was still so much that I hadn't seen. Do yourself a favor and plan a visit in Miami. Whether you relax by the pool or enjoy the museums, you'll have a vacation from which you'll never want to return.



La Bombes Classica dessert
Photography by Josh Painter