

Datum: 17.03.2015

Korrespondentenclippings USA



USA

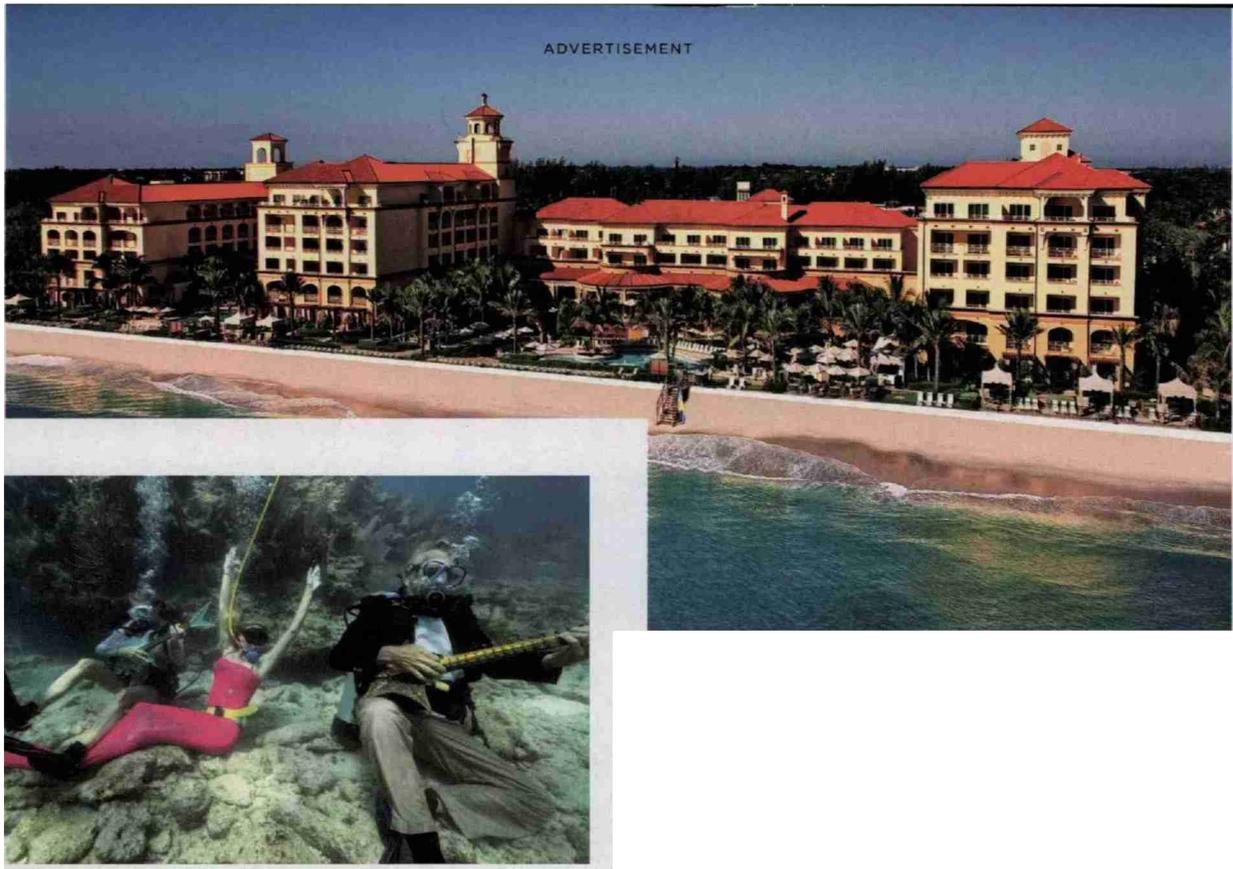
Argus der Presse AG

Medienart: Korrespondentenartikel
Auflage: 1

Themen-Nr.: 558.010
Abo-Nr.: 1095521
Seite: 0
Fläche: 184'141 mm²

The New York Times

Date: Sunday, March 15, 2015
Location: NEW YORK, NY
Circulation (DMA): 1,250,077 (1)
Type (Frequency): Newspaper (S)
Page: A74,A76,A78,A80....
Section: Main
Keyword: Enzo Enea



BEEN THERE, HAVEN'T DONE THAT

Those of us who return to a favorite destination year after year know exactly what Marcel Proust meant when he said "the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." No matter how familiar you are with a place, there are always new and exciting experiences waiting for the curious and adventurous traveler.

Consider the **Florida Keys** (fla-keys.com). Loyal visitors are lured back with a promise that everything will be exactly the same ... and yet completely different. On your next visit you might take your sweet tooth to Key Largo Chocolates, the Keys' only chocolatier (MM 100.5 bayside), and stock up on a stash of quirky "chocodiles" shaped like tiny crocs.

You might have been to Key West but have you discovered the beautiful garden among the ruins of the West Martello Tower, the Civil War-era fort? Open daily, the Joe Allen Garden Center is home to indigenous plants, rare palm trees and a butterfly garden. And while exploring Key

West, stop at the historic Martin Hellings home, a late Queen Anne Victorian-style house that lets you time-travel back to 1892.

Want to get the adrenaline pumping? Head for the Marathon area and look for the big green X at MM 59 bayside. You've found Keys Cable, billed as the nation's first cable park to offer full kite-boarding instruction. The park has two two-point cable systems that are inde-

TOP: Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa. Photo: Greater Miami C.V.B.

ABOVE: Lower Keys Underwater Music Festival. Photo: Bob Care : Florida Keys News Bureau | HO

pendently operated atop a seven-acre lake, allowing for fully customized rides, one rider at a time.

Ever wonder why they call polo the sport of kings? If you're headed to **The Palm Beaches** (palmbeachfl.com), there is still time to find out. More than a month remains of this year's International Polo Season

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(Jan. 4–April 19), the equine extravaganza hosted at the International Polo Club in Wellington. The best way to mingle with the crowd: watch one of the Sunday matches from the Nespresso Grande Pavilion, where a D.J. and a full brunch add to the action on the field.

For sporting action of a different kind, take full advantage of the destination's 47 miles of coastline and waterways. The options range from taking a sailing-boat charter or water-taxi tour from historic Sailfish Marina to taking a guided kayak tour down the Loxahatchee, Florida's only National Wild and Scenic River.

If staying on terra firma is more your style and you've already browsed the internationally renowned boutiques on Palm Beach's famous Worth Avenue, explore the Antique Row Art & Design District in West Palm Beach, home to over 40 antique and specialty shops, art galleries and restaurants. It's considered one of the best places to find 17th- to 20th-century antiques, fine and decorative arts, period art deco, vintage and moderne furnishings.

All that shopping makes for a big appetite. Fortunately The Palm Beaches are made for culinary exploration with over 2,000 dining venues. For your trip's big treat, book ahead for Buccan (run by Clay Conley), Café Boulud (Daniel Boulud) or Morimoto's Sushi Bar (Masaharu Morimoto). And why not attend one of the annual food events such as Boca Bacchanal, Savor the Avenue, Palm Beach Food & Wine Festival, Flavor Palm Beach and Taste of The Palm Beaches?

On your next trip to **Greater Fort Lauderdale** (sunny.org), go nocturnal. Every full moon night, The Ritz-Carlton, right on the beach, hosts a Full Moon Party in its poolside lounge. Proceeds benefit a local charity. Every Friday night the Sheraton Fort Lauderdale Beach Hotel hosts a "live mermaid" show at its Wreck Bar. (The audience looks into the main swimming pool through portholes). Or why not dine in the dark? Market 17, next to the Broward Convention Center, serves a "blind" tasting menu in the dark. Silverware is optional.

For a different gustatory experience, tap into Fort Lauderdale's burgeoning craft-beer trend, stopping to savor original brews at Tap 42, Funky Buddha Brewery, Original Fat Cat's, Laser Wolf, 13 EVEN, Riverside Market and the Mack House.

Or take one of the free surfing, stand-up paddle or skim lessons offered for the whole family by Da Big Kahuna at Island Water Sports in Deerfield Beach on Saturdays, 7–9 a.m. Or stretch your mind and body in a free outdoor yoga class on the Riverwalk at Esplanade Park, Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. Or visit FAT Village (Flagler Arts & Technology Village), the four-block creative district in the city's north end. On the last Saturday of the month, its warehouses morph into open artists' studios, galleries and live-performance venues.

The world-class museums that dot the **St. Petersburg/Clearwater**

area (visitspeteclearwater.com) never stand still. Head for the exceptional Salvador Dalí Museum and catch "Dalí & Da Vinci: Minds, Machines, & Masterpieces" (now through July 26). To honor its 50th year, the Museum of Fine Arts is exhibiting "Monet to Matisse" (now through May 31), a fascinating look at the coast of France as seen through the eyes of noted Impressionists and Modernists.

Every foodie tour of the area should include Locale Market, which just opened on the newly renovated Sundial Plaza in downtown St. Pete. Helmed by celebrated chefs Michael Mina and Don Pintabona, this spacious marketplace serves up delicious, locally sourced artisanal foods. Fans of the "Hunger Games" movies will get déjà vu while visiting William Dean Chocolates in Belleair Bluffs, just minutes from Clearwater Beach. Beginners can sample some of the 35 to 40 flavors, while true believers will want to sign up for a class.

March is prime time for baseball spring training and six major league Baseball teams — the Philadelphia Phillies, Toronto Blue Jays,

New York Yankees, Detroit Tigers, Pittsburgh Pirates and Baltimore Orioles — come out swinging in stadiums within an hour's drive of downtown St. Pete. Hurry, the action stops early next month.

TOP: Shopping and art combined.
Photo: VisitStPeteClearwater.com

ABOVE RIGHT: Paddleboarding in paradise. Photo: Greater Fort Lauderdale C.A.B.

Shop Until You Stop

No matter how great your commitment to retail therapy, you have to take a break at some point. If you're in Key West or St. Pete, recharge the batteries with a different kind of treat.

When shopping along Key West's Duval Street, duck into the newly opened Top Spa at the historic Crowne Plaza Key West La Concha Hotel. Its indulgent spa menu offers three- and four-hour packages including everything from body treatments and facials to nail services and massages.

And when shopping the boutique-lined streets of St. Pete, drop into the colorful Chihuly Collection on Beach Drive, a jewel box of works by Dale Chihuly, the renowned glass artist. If it's refreshment you need, make your way up to the rooftop at the Birchwood, a relatively new boutique hotel overlooking the waterfront, where the colorful cocktails are as good as the view.



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TOURS DE FORCE

It wasn't that long ago that a "tour" conjured up images of bus groups disgorged en masse to flow through a site of interest. No longer. Many of today's tours are redefining the term through edgy insights, privileged access, customized itineraries and a real passion for subjects ranging from architecture and angling to Zen paddleboarding.

The Palm Beaches read like a history book if you know where to look. Catch one of the Downtown West Palm Beach History Strolls led by architect and historian Rick Gonzalez that leave the Historical Society at 4 p.m. on the first Friday of each month. Don't want to walk? Sign up with Palm Beach Segway Tours, take a 20-minute training course, then glide your personal transporter alongside the Intracoastal and down The Palm Beaches' smooth, manicured lanes with your guide.

If you have a need for speed, drop into Speed Boat Adventures in Tierra Verde, just 10 minutes from St. Pete, then drive your own speedboat for the entirety of the narrated tour through intracoastal waterways and the Gulf of Mexico. [Keep a lookout for dolphins and manatees.] If you're an angler, seek out the services of Spencer Goodwin, a

professional fishing guide whose company, Tampa Bay Kayak Charters, takes small groups on kayak fishing tours across the bay's grass flats and around its mangrove-lush shoreline.

If flying through the Everglades National Park aboard an airboat isn't exciting enough for you, try experiencing the river of grass by moonlight. Sign up for a Red Eye Everglades tour at Sawgrass Recreation Park, and you will soon be seeing those splashes in the shadows and the "red eyes" of reptiles leering out of the darkness.

Another way to get your heart thumping in Greater Fort Lauderdale is to go looking for paranormal activity on a River Ghost Tour at the historic Stranahan House, the oldest surviving structure in Broward County, right in the heart of downtown. Held on Sunday evenings at 7:30 p.m., the hour-long tour includes a visit inside the Stranahan House and a boat ride on the New River.

Serenity Eco Therapy is one more sign that paddleboarding is, umm, riding the crest of a popularity wave. Recently launched in the Lower Florida Keys by owner/operator Sarah Sullivan, its daily classes combine meditation, yoga, Pilates, cardio and paddleboards on Atlantic waters near the Lower Keys' Bahia Honda State Park.



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History Courses

FIVE CHALLENGES FOR 2015

Find the Bullfighter

On your next visit to St. Petersburg's remarkable Salvador Dalí Museum, seek out "Hallucinogenic Toreador," one of the 96 Dalí oil paintings in the collection. Look at it just right and you will see the upper body of a toreador, formed out of 28 Venus de Milo forms and other elements.

Spot a Key Deer

As you weave your way down through The Keys, get some nature therapy by walking through the forests, wetlands and mangroves of National Key Deer Refuge on Big Pine Key. There is a good chance you will see one of these indigenous small deer (weighing in at around 80 pounds). The refuge was founded back in 1957 when the deer population was at a low of 27.

Pigeon Key, The Florida Keys.
Photo: Visit Florida

Florida has created a Historic Golf Trail to honor its illustrious golf tradition, which dates back to the 1890s.

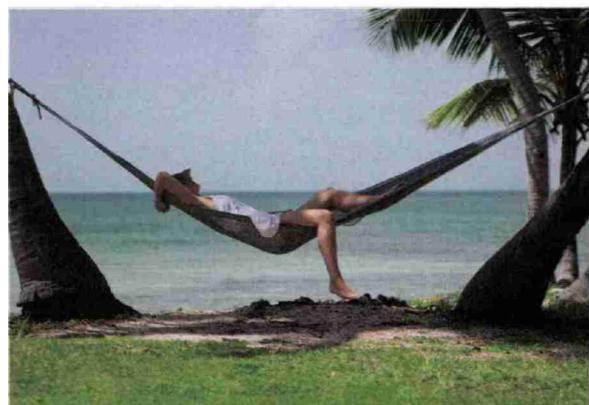
Scattered around the state from Pensacola to Key West, all of the 50 sites on the trail were opened prior to 1949, and many were built during the "Golden Age" of golf course architecture (the early teens through the late 1930s) by renowned architects such as Donald Ross, Seth Raynor, Tom Bendelow and Herbert Strong.

The trail is described in full sepia beauty and all-you-need-detail history, current conditions, insider information and nearby historic sites, at floridahistoricgolftrail.com.

There's an App for That

GREATER FORT LAUDERDALE: The Convention & Visitors Bureau (sunny.org) offers handy free apps such as the "Fork Lauderdale" dining app, which guides you through the destination's culinary and nightlife scene. Feeling caged in by winter? Download the "Defrost Your Swimsuit" app, insert your photo into a block of ice and watch it melt, revealing a new you on the beach.

FLORIDA KEYS: To get the insider experience of the Florida Keys, check out the "Local's Choice Vacation Guide" found on fla-keys.com. It's filled with in-depth insights into residents' favorite attractions, historic sites, watering holes and restaurants — including a Top 10 list of locals' favorite pastimes.



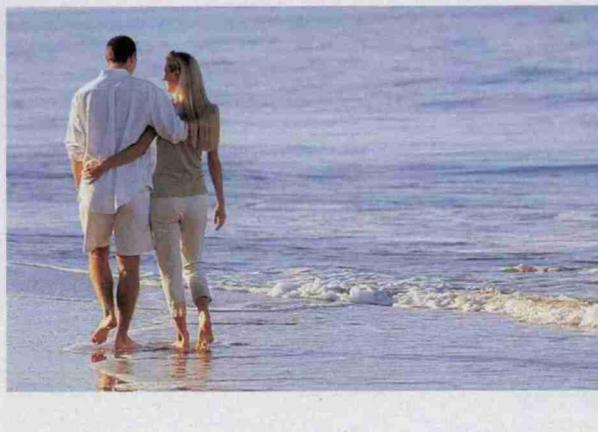
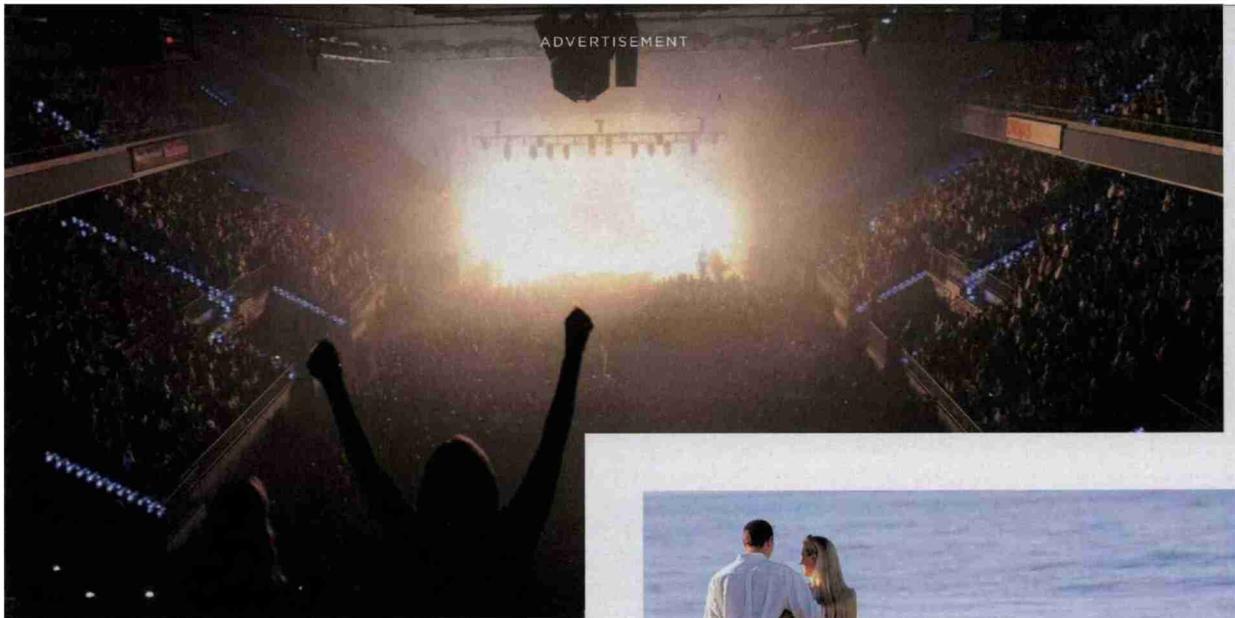


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Eat Astronaut Ice Cream

On your journey through the halls and hangars of the Kennedy Space Center on Cape Canaveral, drop by the Space Shop and pick up some freeze-dried astronaut ice cream (\$3.99). It might not taste as good as some of the earthly varieties but eating the same Neapolitan or cookies-and-cream that was enjoyed on the Space Shuttle will rocket your taste buds into outer space.

Take Home the Lost Van Gogh

There are plenty of excellent antique districts scattered around Florida, but if you're looking for a "find" then head to Mount Dora, the quaint town of clapboard houses and quiet neighborhoods just 25 miles northwest of Orlando. Among its many antique stores you will find Renninger's Antique Center, with its weekend open air markets, and the Village Antique Mall with more than 60 vendors.

Find Out for Whom the Bell Tolls

Spring is the best time to stroll the pathways through the azaleas and magnolias in historic Bok Tower Gardens, centrally located in Lake Wales between Tampa and Orlando. But what makes the experience tru-

ly unique is the live carillon concert that rings out of the 205-foot Singing Tower Thursday through Sunday, mid-October through mid-May.

For more ideas, tap into Visit Florida's endlessly informative, subject-specialized panel of Insiders at VisitFlorida.com.

WINTER SHORTS

As any travel veteran will tell you, where you stay is just as crucial as what you do — particularly in the case of a short winter escape.

Spend a few entertainment-packed days at **Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino** (seminolehardrockhollywood.com), the 500-room, AAA Four Diamond-rated resort in Hollywood known for its serious sense of fun, dining opportunities and world-class entertainment.

Its three-acre casino features nearly 90 gaming tables, separate high-limit rooms and the sophisticated fine-dining venue Council Oak Steaks & Seafood. The indulgent Rock Spa offers an all-encompassing rejuvenation of the senses, body and mind. There are 10 high-energy nightclubs, lounges and bars, and 16 boutique shops. And the 5,500-seat Hard Rock Live concert arena shines the spotlight on a constantly



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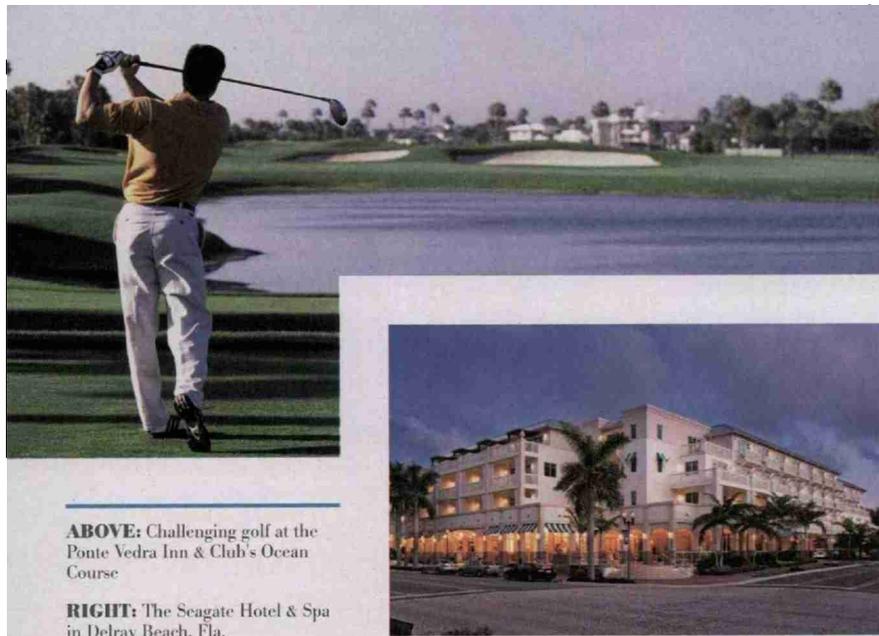
revolving lineup of big-name performers.

This month, the resorts extensive culinary choices have increased with the opening of Kuro, a "sophisticated, social and interactive" Japanese restaurant led by Executive Chef Alex Becker. Kuro is just one part of a property-wide "Future Rock" refreshment that was completed last December and included a refreshed pool oasis and Beach Club restaurant, as well as a modernized lobby bar (L-Bar) and Plum Lounge for V.I.P. guests, a redesigned High Limit Tables room, and luxurious penthouse suites on the 12th floor.

For small-hotel intimacy with large-hotel facilities, take a look at **The Lodge & Club** (pontevedra.com) in the tony seaside community of Ponte Vedra Beach. Built in the grand Mediterranean style, the resort sits amid graceful palms and rolling dunes, looking out on a long expanse of beach. This AAA Four Diamond boutique hotel has been a return-every-year favorite since it opened its doors in 1989.

TOP: Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino.

ABOVE: Strolling the Atlantic coastline at The Lodge & Club.



ABOVE: Challenging golf at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club's Ocean Course

RIGHT: The Seagate Hotel & Spa in Delray Beach, Fla.

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Miami's Hot New Address

If you're looking to transition from a frequent Florida visitor to a resident, take a good look at Park Grove on South Bayshore Drive in Miami's bayside enclave of Coconut Grove.

When completed, the five-acre site will contain three luxurious residential towers, a bank and a multilevel amenity deck. Its bold, contemporary lines are the work of Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas and his firm, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA).

Sweeping glass walls will flood its 279 residences with sunlight and make the panoramic Biscayne Bay views part of the décor. They come complete with airy, open kitchens designed by William Sofield. All finishes and appliances are of the highest quality.

Park Grove's facilities reflect the same exacting attention to design and quality — from the rooftop pool deck to the surrounding gardens, designed by Enzo Enea.

Park Grove is hidden away in the quiet, established neighborhood of Coconut Grove within walking distance of boutiques, restaurants, yachting clubs, cafés and a five-minute drive to landmarks such as Vizcaya Museum and Gardens and The Kampong. It's also close to Miami's urban action.

If you're interested in becoming part of the story, you'd better move fast. Eighty percent of the units are already under contract. Prices start at \$800,000 for the Club Residences and \$2,000,000 at Two Park Grove.

For more details, call 305-834-7600 or email sales@park-grove.com.

The resort's 66 luxurious rooms and suites all boast panoramic vistas of the Atlantic, four-poster beds, elaborate window treatments, original artwork, custom-made furniture and granite and marble bathrooms. Many accommodations have a fireplace and Jacuzzi tub.

Recreational facilities include a white-sand beach, the Atlantic surf, and two heated pools. There is a spacious gym with daily, all complimentary exercise classes. Guests have privileges to nearby golf and tennis facilities, and a luxury day spa.

The Lodge & Club is known for its two restaurants — the Innlet Dining Room with its panoramic views, and the Oasis, a casual beachfront bistro with a canopy of umbrellas and excellent people-watching. Daily tea, served with cookies and scones, is a guest favorite.

Among the resort's attractive deals, the Stir the Fire package includes a room with a romantic fireplace, a bottle of champagne, and chocolate-covered strawberries upon arrival.

The nearby **Ponte Vedra Inn & Club** (pontevedra.com) is another excellent choice for choosy travelers. Opened in 1928, this AAA Five Diamond resort has two on-site golf courses, a spa, a tennis center and four pools, all spread out on a beautiful 300-acre property running along the Atlantic coast.

Palms and rolling dunes are the backdrop for 250 rooms and suites, most with breathtaking ocean views. Services include such perks as 24-hour room service and a pillow menu. For foodies there is the oceanfront Seahorse Grille, serving up delicious cuisine in a contemporary and stylish setting, and, for shoppers, a retail promenade.

The white-sand beach is perfect for swimming, strolling or just relaxing in the shade. The luxurious spa, the region's largest, offers more than 100 beauty and pampering services. Other recreational pleasures include golf, tennis, gym and pools, biking, fishing, sailing and horseback riding.

This spring, the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club is offering two popular specials. The Bed & Breakfast package includes lodging and a full American breakfast served each morning in the historic Inn Dining Room. For golf enthusiasts, the Grand Slam Golf package takes advantage of the property's Ocean and

Lagoon Courses by including lodging, daily breakfast and unlimited green fees with a cart.

Another resort combining intimacy with world-class facilities is in charming Delray Beach. **The Seagate Hotel**

& Spa (theseagatehotel.com), with only 154 rooms, has a boutique atmosphere and beach-chic décor emphasized by giant aquariums and a 2,500-gallon shark tank. Yet it also has the type of facilities that you expect to find only in a much larger property.

The list starts with upscale dining options including the signature restaurant, Atlantic Grille, which serves up contemporary American cuisine with a focus on locally sourced seafood. The Seagate Country Club offers Har-Tru tennis courts, a full-service clubhouse, and a Joe Lee-designed golf course that's one of the finest championship courses in Palm Beach County.

Its full-service 8,000-square-foot spa is ready to restore and reward. And, when it's time for fun in the sun, there's the inviting Seagate Beach Club, less than a mile from the hotel and connected by regular trolley shuttles. Designed in a British Colonial style, the club has an ocean-side swimming pool and direct access to a family-friendly beach.

The Seagate's Players Golf Package pairs a two-night-minimum stay in Deluxe accommodations with a free 18-hole round of golf. For nongolfers there is the Beach Package, which adds in such treats as a Seagate signature beach towel and a beach tote when you book a one-night stay in Deluxe accommodations. The Girls Just Want to Have WINE! Package (valid now through Dec. 20) includes a four-part, nearly four-hour spa indulgence with grape-inspired treatments plus complimentary wines. And, looking ahead to the summer, the Seagate's 4th Night Free Offer is an outstanding bargain for travel June 1 through Sept. 30. If you are headed for the Greater Fort Lauderdale area and want to mix the destination's urban attractions and quiet days on the beach, consider booking your winter "short" at Lago Mar Resort & Club with its 500 feet of private beach. Also ideally located, the Crowne Plaza Hollywood Beach Resort offers a great value, a large infinity pool and a beautiful beach just across the street.

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CONNOISSEURS' CALENDAR

* Food *

Busch Gardens Food & Wine Festival
Tampa
Saturdays and Sundays,
Now-April 26

Original Marathon Seafood Festival
Marathon
March 14-15

Seafood & Music Festival
Marco Island
March 21-22

Boca Bacchanal
Boca Raton
March 27-28

Florida Blueberry Festival
Brooksville
April 11-12

Wine & Food Festival
Deerfield Beach
April 24-26

Seafood Festival
Pompano Beach
April 25-27

Las Olas Food & Wine Festival
Fort Lauderdale
May 1

Pensacola Crawfish Festival
May 1-3

Restaurant Week
Clearwater Beach
May 11-22

*** Art & Culture ***
Palm Beach International Film Festival
The Palm Beaches
March 26-April 3

Barrett-Jackson Auto Auction
West Palm Beach
April 17-19

Melbourne Art Festival
April 25-26

International Fringe Theatre Festival
Orlando
May 13-26

*** Music ***
Suwannee Springfest
Spirit of the Suwannee
Music Park, Live Oak
March 19-22

Jazz in the Gardens
Fort Lauderdale
March 21-22

Tampa Bay Blues Festival
St. Petersburg
April 10-12

Rock the Ocean Tortuga Music Festival
Fort Lauderdale
April 11-15

Seabreeze Jazz Festival
Panama City Beach
April 22-26

*** Festivals ***
Firestone Grand Prix
St. Petersburg
March 27-29

Florida Derby
Fort Lauderdale
March 28

Dunedin Highland Games
St. Petersburg/Clearwater
March 28

Delray Affair
Delray Beach
April 10-12

Conch Republic Independence Celebration
Key West
April 17-26

Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival
Clearwater Beach
April 17-26

Sunfest
West Palm Beach
April 29-May 3

For more inspiration and insider tips for your next trip to Florida, go to VisitFlorida.com.