

LIFESTYLE

Riding the Wave...

By Cleopatra King

Better known in the 80s and 90s for its vice problems, the city of Miami has performed an impressive about turn to become a major international cultural and financial hub. Behind the familiar sunshine, neon, palm trees and roller skates – the Magic City is fast becoming America's most exciting cultural destination, with new galleries, museums, performing arts centres and landmark architectural projects springing up.





...in Miami



Perhaps the only surprising thing is that it's taken this long. When it comes to outstanding natural setting, climate and location, Miami is hard to beat. Sat at the nexus of North and South America, geographically and culturally, it has always danced to the beat of overlapping, vibrant cultures. Atlantic waves break onto white sandy beaches, and nowhere is Florida's 'sunshine state' motto more deserved. What's more, this is a city with a design heritage that few others can match, with its peerless collection of Art Deco buildings now restored to their curvaceous, tropical-tinged glory.

Yet it's only in recent years that Miami has really begun to fulfil its potential. The arrival of Design Miami and international art fair Art Basel in Miami Beach (first held in 2002) put Miami firmly on the international art circuit as the winter stop-off of choice. At the same time, the rejuvenation of the once-neglected Midtown neighbourhood – now renamed the Design District, and home to galleries, cafes and performance spaces – has opened up new opportunities and set off waves of creativity and energy that have shaken up the whole city.

Miami, like other American cities, was by no means immune to the recent economic downturn - but what's been truly remarkable is the pace of the recovery here. If property is the barometer by which to measure a city's confidence and strength, then Miami is definitely on the up, in more ways than one. And as prices rise steadily, so do a new clutch of stand-out developments that continue Miami's tradition of innovative, bold and distinctive building into the 21st century.

Along the shore from the better-known, bolder, brasher community of Miami Beach you'll find

Surfside, an exclusive neighbourhood boasting miles of pristine oceanfront and easy access to the sophisticated shops and restaurants of Bal Harbour Village. Nestled within the coveted 33154 Surfside postcode lies The Surf Club Four Seasons Private Residences, an historic institution that has calmly watched Miami's fluctuating fortunes from its tranquil beachfront setting since 1930. One of America's most exclusive social institutions, the Surf Club was founded as a glamorous retreat that provided a bridge between relaxed Floridian beach culture – all cabanas, palm trees and lazy days – and the glamour of high society. It quickly became the private sanctuary of the world's cultural, artistic, intellectual and financial élite. Winston Churchill settled down in the shade here to paint the Atlantic breakers; Elizabeth Taylor and Frank Sinatra sought refuge from the flashbulbs of fame, and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor were regular visitors. A glittering enfilade of social events – balls, cocktail parties, elegant dinners – filled the decades and the elegant rooms of Russell Pancoast's Mediterranean Revival villa.

With the passing of the years the building fell into genteel disrepair but now, much like its home city, the Club is about to get a new lease of life. As elsewhere in the region, this is a renaissance that's all about outstanding design. Opening in 2016, The Surf Club Four Seasons Private Residences will be reimaged as a new residential and hotel development of the very finest standards by Pritzker prize-winning architect Richard Meier. The original Club – both the building itself and the institution it houses – will remain, restored and preserved for future generations. Meanwhile, around it will rise breathtaking new buildings that are Meier's modern interpretation of the same values of elegance, discretion and luxury that inspired the Surf Club's original founders.

Meier's work is known for its clean Corbusian geometry and modernist principles, making it the perfect contemporary counterpoint to Miami's legacy of Art Deco and Modernist styles. His design for The Surf Club Four Seasons Private Residences is



characteristically bold in its simplicity, with two new 12-storey structures in sinuous glass and steel flanking the central 1920s pavilion. This will be Meier's first residential project south of Manhattan - a real coup for Surfside and Miami, even as the city becomes more and more accustomed to the sight of developments from other world-renowned architects. (Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Herzog and de Meuron and Bjarke Ingels are all making their own contributions to the skyline in the coming years). When The Surf Club Four Seasons Private Residences' new incarnation is complete, 127 private residences - including 13 penthouses - a five-star Four Seasons hotel, and 30 hotel-serviced apartments will surround the original building. There will be new restaurants bars, a state-of-the-art spa, and no less than three fitness centres, all set among landscaped grounds.

This spectacular setting and unparalleled views of the Atlantic are echoed and embraced in the fluidity and lightness of Meier's designs. Glass curtain walls, frameless balconies, and vast terraces will let the ocean light flood through to create a true sense of indoor-outdoor living. The 13 penthouses - no two are the same - will be, in effect, collaborative projects between their owners and Meier himself, acting in consultation to shape the floor plans, fittings and furnishings. Purchasing a penthouse here, then, offers a rare chance for buyers to collaborate with a world acclaimed architect to create, as well as own, their slice of the new Miami.

If The Surf Club Four Seasons Private Residences had survived as a relic of a lost, golden age, that survival would have been tinged



with regret for what had been lost. Thankfully, while its legacy continues to be preserved and honoured, there's more to celebrate and anticipate in the region now than perhaps ever before. A city which has truly come of age is one which is as much at ease with its past as with its present and future and The Surf Club Four Seasons Private Residences is testament to this captivating transformation.

Prices for residences at The Surf Club Four Seasons Private Residences range from \$3 million - \$35 million.

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