

March 28, 2026

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# I've Visited Florida for 20+ Years and This Is My Favorite City—and It's Known as the 'Hamptons of the South'

This Sunshine State city is an icon for good reason.

By [Lauren Dana Ellman](#)

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[TRAVEL + LEISURE EDITORIAL GUIDELINES](#)

Published on March 28, 2026



**Aerial view of Palm Beach, Florida.** Credit: Crystal Bolin Photography/Getty Images

TOP 5 CAN'T MISS

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- Stay at The Colony Hotel, which has long embodied Palm Beach glamour with its pink facade, lively pool scene, and its buzzy on-site restaurant.
- Stroll Worth Avenue's Mediterranean-style arcades, designer boutiques, art galleries, and hidden courtyards.
- Order the sweet corn agnolotti and tuna crisp at Buccan, one of Palm Beach's most popular restaurants.
- Visit the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, a 75-room Gilded Age mansion that provides a glimpse into the lavish history that shaped Palm Beach.
- Spend an afternoon enjoying Palm Beach's wide stretch of golden sand and clear Atlantic waters—the area is perfect for swimming, sunbathing, and long seaside walks.

[Palm Beach](#), Florida, has long been synonymous with a particular brand of American glamour. It's [palm-lined streets](#), pastel landmarks, and a social season that has drawn stylish visitors for more than a century have earned it the nickname "[the Hamptons of the South](#)." Set on a narrow barrier island along Florida's Atlantic coast, just across the Intracoastal Waterway from [West Palm Beach](#), this destination rewards travelers with a delightful blend of historic charm and modern energy.

Classic institutions like [The Colony Hotel](#) and [The Brazilian Court](#) remain perennial favorites among locals and travelers alike, just as the chic boutiques lining Worth Avenue still define the island's retail landscape. But still, the destination isn't stuck in the past. New openings—most notably [The Vineta Hotel Palm Beach](#) (the first U.S. property from the luxury hospitality management company, [Oetker Hotels](#)), to buzzy restaurants like [The Polo Room](#)—are bringing fresh momentum to the island's social and culinary scenes. For travelers, that combination of historic landmarks and contemporary innovation is what makes Palm Beach an ideal place to return to year after year.

Here's what you need to know before planning a trip to Palm Beach, Florida.

Best Hotels & Resorts



**The lobby inside of The Breakers Hotel. The Breakers**

#### The Breakers

One of Palm Beach's most iconic hotels since 1896, [The Breakers](#) is a grand oceanfront resort that's a destination in and of itself. Today, the 140-acre property attracts well-heeled travelers with its private beach, four [oceanfront pools](#), a spa, two championship golf courses, and extensive racquet facilities for tennis, pickleball, and padel. Accommodations range from guest rooms and spacious suites to the ultra-exclusive Flagler Club, a private hotel within a hotel with just 21 rooms and suites.

#### White Elephant Palm Beach

[White Elephant Palm Beach](#) has a distinctly contemporary feel compared with some of the island's more traditional, old-world properties—and it's among my favorite places to stay in town. Set in a restored 1920s-era building, this chic boutique hotel pairs historic bones with airy, [beach-inspired interiors](#) that look and feel like they were pulled from a design magazine. Rooms and suites are finished in a light palette of pale woods, soft neutrals, and clean-lined furnishings, giving the spaces a relaxed but refined Palm Beach look. The property also has a small pool as well as the swanky [Lola 41](#) restaurant.

#### The Brazilian Court Hotel

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Just steps from Worth Avenue, the [Brazilian Court Hotel](#) provides a taste of the quieter, more classic side of Palm Beach. The historic property—set to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2026—is defined by [Spanish Colonial architecture](#), tropical courtyards, and babbling fountains, giving the 80-room hotel a secluded, residential feel despite its central location. Accommodations range from studios to one, two, and three-bedroom suites arranged around the garden courtyards and pool. The hotel is also home to the acclaimed [Café Boulud](#), long considered one of the island’s top restaurants. Guests can take advantage of beach service, complimentary bike rentals, or a two-hour cruise aboard the hotel’s 44-foot Italian Solaris yacht, Bc One, which was the highlight of my stay.

## Palm House

[Palm House](#) was named among the best new hotels of the year on [Travel + Leisure’s 2025 It List](#). The 79-room boutique property brings a fresh, contemporary feel to a destination long defined by historic resorts. Guest rooms feature floor-to-ceiling windows, private balconies, marble bathrooms, and calming, sea-inspired interiors that feel more like private residences than traditional hotel rooms. Dining centers on the eponymously named Dining Room, developed in collaboration with Nobu, which serves classics like miso black cod and yellowtail jalapeño. In the lobby, a shimmering shell-and-coral mural by local artist Christa Wilm anchors the vaulted space beneath Murano glass chandeliers, with ruby seating and a pink stone bar adding a bold touch of Palm Beach glamour, setting the tone for a vibrant stay.

## The Colony Hotel

[The Colony Hotel](#) is arguably the quintessential Palm Beach stay, known for its iconic pink facade, palm-filled interiors, and lively social scene just steps from Worth Avenue. Over the years, it's attracted stars such as Judy Garland, Sophia Loren, and Frank Sinatra. Now a historic landmark, the hotel has 93 colorful accommodations decorated in cheerful shades of yellow, pink, and blue. The famously Instagrammable pool anchors the scene alongside Swifty’s and the Living Room, while Pink Paradise Café serves espresso and light bites. Guests can borrow custom beach cruisers or take advantage of the hotel’s Beach Butler service for a perfectly arranged day on the sand, just steps away.

## The Vineta Hotel

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[The Vineta Hotel](#) is Palm Beach’s newest hotel and the first U.S. property by the Oetker Collection. Located two blocks from Worth Avenue, the historic property has been restored with a bright redesign inspired by the island’s sunny, coastal setting. The intimate hotel has 41 rooms and suites with light, airy interiors. Dining and drinks center on Coco’s, which serves Mediterranean dishes in a courtyard setting, along with cocktails at The Bar and casual fare at the Pool House. A playful “Vineta A La Cart” service brings treats like Champagne, artisan gelato, and Dr. Barbara Sturm skincare to guests via roaming carts.

## Best Things to Do



**Wicker Rolling Chair inside the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum.** Jillian Cain/Adobe Stock

## Flagler Museum

Step back into Palm Beach’s Gilded Age at the [Flagler Museum](#). Housed in Whitehall, the palatial 60,000-square-foot mansion built by oil and railroad tycoon Henry Morrison Flagler in 1902, the property has 75 rooms and was once described as grander than many European palaces. Today, the restored mansion is

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open to the public, offering a glimpse into the opulent lifestyle that helped shape Palm Beach as a winter resort for America's rich and famous.

## Go Shopping

Palm Beach is teeming with shops, from big-name designers to independent boutiques. Worth Avenue is the island's most famous retail stretch, known for its Mediterranean-style walkways and charming courtyards. Here, labels like Chanel, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, and Cartier sit alongside Palm Beach staples like [Lilly Pulitzer](#), known for its colorful resortwear, and local boutiques such as Julia Amory and Michelle Farmer. Nearby, Via Mizner and Via Parigi offer tucked-away lanes lined with smaller specialty boutiques, galleries, and cafés. Just a few blocks away, [The Royal Poinciana Plaza](#) blends high-end fashion with [stylish boutiques](#) such as [LoveShackFancy](#) and [Zimmermann](#), as well as cafés and lifestyle shops.

## Hit the Beach

What would a trip to Palm Beach be without visiting its eponymously named stretch of sand? The island's wide, golden shoreline runs along the Atlantic, offering calm waters and plenty of space for swimming, sunbathing, and long walks by the water.

## Best Shopping



**Storefronts in Palm Beach.** Karen Hibbard/Travel + Leisure

#### Coniglio Palm Beach

[Coniglio Palm Beach](#), founded by Palm Beach native Christina Coniglio, is known for its signature "Free Size" philosophy and adjustable resortwear designed to fit a range of bodies. The boutique offers easy, breezy pieces—from dresses and button-downs to breezy skirts and pants—in bold, playful prints that capture the colorful spirit of Palm Beach style.

#### Kassatly's

Dating back to the 1920s, [Kassatly's](#) is said to be the oldest shop on Worth Avenue and has amassed a loyal following for its fine linens, pajamas, lingerie, and cashmere sweaters. Family-run for generations, the boutique remains a Palm Beach institution.

#### Michelle Farmer

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[Michelle Farmer](#) is a Palm Beach-based label specializing in resortwear, ready-to-wear, and evening pieces designed in the brand's local atelier. The boutique also carries fine jewelry and home décor, all reflecting that iconic, polished Palm Beach aesthetic.

Julia Armory

[Julia Amory](#) is known for its colorful dresses, tunics, and printed textiles that reinterpret classic silhouettes with traditional block prints and bold patterns. Founded in 2017, the brand has quickly become a Palm Beach favorite and has also expanded to Charleston, South Carolina, and Southampton, New York.

Best Restaurants



**A meal served at Buccan.** Buccan

Buccan

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[Buccan](#) is one of Palm Beach's most popular restaurants, known for its lively atmosphere and inventive small plates. Don't miss the sweet corn agnolotti, along with standouts like the tuna crisp and short rib empanadas. Tip: If you can't snag a table—or even if you can—pop into the nearby [Buccan Sandwich Shop](#) for the famous beef carpaccio sandwich, perfect for enjoying poolside or beachside.

## The Polo Room

Created in collaboration with polo star Nacho Figueras, [this new haunt](#) (which opened its doors in Dec. 2025) stands out for its equestrian-inspired décor—which makes sense given its name. The intimate dining room draws a well-heeled crowd for dinner and cocktails, while the menu blends continental favorites with nods to Figueras's Argentine roots—think empanadas, crudos, house-made pastas, and dishes like lobster frites, steaks, and fresh seafood.

## Renato's

[This upscale Italian restaurant](#) exudes romance, with a palm-fringed, bougainvillea-draped courtyard softly lit at night. Inside, the elegant, old-world dining room offers classic Italian fare for lunch and dinner—though the real move is to request a table outside.

## Le Bilboquet Palm Beach

[Le Bilboquet](#) is a lively French bistro tucked along Via Encantada just off Worth Avenue, drawing a fashionable crowd for lunch and dinner. The menu features [French bistro classics](#)—like steak frites, seafood, and the restaurant's famous Cajun chicken—served in a chic courtyard setting surrounded by palms and jasmine that feels quintessentially Palm Beach.

## Green's Luncheonette

[Green's Luncheonette](#) is an old-school soda fountain tucked inside Green's Pharmacy, serving breakfast and lunch favorites at a retro counter that feels like a step back in time. You can't go wrong with an omelette, burger, or club sandwich—ideally washed down with a classic milkshake.

## Best Time To Visit



**The Worth Avenue clocktower in Palm Beach, Florida.** Sean Pavone/Getty Images

The best time to visit Palm Beach is from December to April, when the island's famed social season is in full swing. During these months, restaurants, galleries, and boutiques buzz with activity, and the calendar fills with high-profile events, charity galas, and cultural gatherings. [Polo season](#) in nearby Wellington draws international crowds throughout the winter, while March brings the [Palm Beach International Boat Show](#), one of the largest yacht shows in the country. December also kicks off the [Palm Beach Food & Wine Festival](#), which attracts top chefs and culinary talent for tastings and special dinners across the island. This is also when Palm Beach's hotels, beach clubs, and outdoor cafés feel especially lively, with visitors and seasonal residents returning to the island.

How to Get There



**Passengers walk through a Brightline station.** Eva Marie Uzcategui/Bloomberg via Getty Images

The easiest way to reach Palm Beach is to fly into Palm Beach International Airport (PBI), about 15 minutes from the island. The airport is small and easy to navigate, with direct flights to major cities such as New York, Boston, Chicago, and Atlanta. From there, taxis, ride-share hailing services like Uber, and rental cars can quickly take you across the bridge to Palm Beach. Travelers can also fly into Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL), about an hour south, which offers a wider selection of domestic and international flights.

Another convenient option is the [high-speed Brightline train](#), which connects nearby West Palm Beach with Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and Orlando. The sleek trains have comfortable seating and frequent departures, making it an easy option for day trips or regional travel. Tickets can be booked in advance through the Brightline app or on its website.

Cities and Islands to Visit



**Seagulls flying over a beach on Singer Island.** LUNAMARINA/Getty Images

### Singer Island

[Singer Island](#) is home to a quiet stretch of coastline known for its wide beaches and clear Atlantic waters—it's an easy 20-minute drive from Palm Beach. The area is popular for swimming, snorkeling, and paddleboarding, and the nearby [John D. MacArthur Beach State Park](#) provides opportunities to hike lush nature trails, kayak through mangrove estuaries, and enjoy one of the region's most unspoiled beaches.

### West Palm Beach

Just across the bridge, West Palm Beach has a more relaxed, creative vibe compared to Palm Beach. The newly developed [Nora District](#) has transformed historic railway warehouses into a buzzy hub for restaurants, cafés, boutiques, and coffee shops—in my opinion, a visit to [Sunday Motor Co.](#) is reason to make the detour alone. Farther south, [Antique Row](#) is known for its stretch of more than 40 vintage and

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antique shops specializing in art, lighting, and decorative pieces. Up north, [Northwood Village](#) has emerged as an artsy neighborhood filled with galleries, vintage stores, and independent cafés.

## Peanut Island

Located about 20 minutes from the heart of Palm Beach by car, [Peanut Island](#) is a quick and easy tropical escape from the mainland—and it still flies under the radar. Accessible by boat or water taxi, the 79-acre island is known for its clear, calm waters and excellent snorkeling. The island also has shaded picnic areas, walking paths, and a marina, making it a popular day trip for boating and beachgoing. It's also home to the historic John F. Kennedy Cold War Bunker, a fallout shelter built during the Cold War for the president's visits to Palm Beach.

## How to Get Around

The easiest way to get around Palm Beach is arguably by car. Rental cars are available at Palm Beach International Airport, and ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft are easily accessible in the city as well.

If you prefer to explore on foot, the city does have a couple of public transportation options. [PalmTran](#) is Palm Beach County's public bus system, with routes connecting Palm Beach, West Palm Beach, and surrounding areas—it's a budget-friendly way to travel longer distances. Alternatively, you could use [Circuit](#), which operates small electric vehicles that function like a shared local shuttle around Palm Beach and West Palm Beach. Riders can request pickups through the Circuit app, and fares are typically just a few dollars, depending on distance.

For cyclists, Palm Beach is compact, flat, and very bike-friendly, making cycling a popular way to explore the island. Many hotels offer complimentary bikes, and rental shops are available nearby. [Scenic routes](#) along the Lake Trail and oceanfront streets make it easy to get around while enjoying the views.