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ONSITEREVIEW

West Palm Beach MADE FOR THE WEEKEND

By Deserae del Campo

Is 48 hours enough to experience a destination? Probably not. There will always be another restaurant to try, another neighborhood to wander through or a hidden local gem that somehow escaped the itinerary.

But after a whirlwind weekend in West Palm Beach, I realized that experiencing a destination isn't about doing everything—it's about what lingers once you've left.

In just two days, I enjoyed breakfast at a neighborhood hotspot where the tables rarely sat empty; explored a quaint music-themed park rooted in community history; wandered through a walkable downtown filled with shops and restaurants; and ended evenings savoring memorable (and IG-worthy) meals.

It wasn't enough time to see everything but it was enough time to understand why West Palm Beach deserves a closer look.

What stood out most wasn't a marquee attraction. It was how easygoing the city felt. West Palm Beach invites visitors to slow down. It's the kind of destination where you can arrive on a Friday afternoon, settle in without stress and spend the next two days exploring at your own pace.

For clients seeking a South Florida option that feels sophisticated without being overwhelming, West Palm Beach offers an appealing mix of culture, cuisine and convenience.

Accessibility is part of the appeal. I arrived aboard **Brightline**, turning what could have been a traffic-filled drive from Miami into a relaxing journey. Meanwhile, Palm Beach International Airport is less than 10 minutes from downtown West Palm Beach, making it an ideal fly-in destination, while Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport offers another convenient gateway for visitors extending a South Florida itinerary.

Whether clients are planning a quick getaway, a girlfriends' weekend or adding a few extra days pre- or post-cruise, getting here is refreshingly simple.

A City Made for Wandering

That ease of exploration became one of the weekend's biggest surprises.

Shortly after arriving, I headed to the Nora District, where century-old warehouses have been transformed into chef-driven restaurants, boutiques, wellness studios and gathering spaces. Named after North Railroad Avenue, the walkable neighborhood encourages visitors to linger rather than rush from one attraction to the next.

Dinner at **Del Mar** provided the perfect introduction to the city. The Mediterranean-inspired restaurant balances polished service with a welcoming atmosphere, offering seafood, steaks and handcrafted cocktails that set the tone for the weekend ahead.

Nora's evolution is far from complete. Later this year, **The Nora Hotel**, a 201-room boutique property developed in partnership with **BD Hotels** and hotelier Sean MacPherson, is expected to open within the district.

The next morning reinforced something I had already begun to appreciate about West Palm Beach—this is a city best discovered through its everyday moments.

Breakfast at **Aioli** felt like stepping into a neighborhood tradition. Families gathered around tables, regulars chatted between bites and a steady line of customers waited patiently for pastries, breakfast sandwiches and specialty drinks.

This energy was a constant during our visit, offering a glimpse into local life beyond the visitor experience. (We heard the sourdough baking class at Aioli is a must for visitors and locals.)

That same sense of discovery carried throughout the day.

A visit to the **Henry Morrison Flagler Museum** provided insight into the region's storied past, while the **Norton Museum of Art** showcased an impressive art collection spanning European, American, Chinese and contemporary works.

In downtown, **CityPlace** revealed another side of West Palm Beach, blending

shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly setting designed for leisurely exploration. Lunch at **Eataly**, housed within historic Harriet Himmel Hall, combined familiar Italian favorites with a marketplace stocked with artisanal cheeses, fresh pasta, chocolates and wine—ideal for travelers who enjoy turning a meal into an experience.

One of the weekend's more interesting stops was **Heart & Soul Park**. Located in the Historic Northwest neighborhood, this music-themed space reflects the area's cultural heritage through interactive instruments, public art and gathering spaces designed for community connection.

Across from the historic Sunset Lounge music venue, the park serves as both playground and tribute, encouraging visitors to engage with the stories and traditions that helped shape the community. It may not appear on every must-see list, but it offers one of the destination's most meaningful experiences.

One Last Bite

Food became the thread connecting many of the weekend's experiences.

The culinary journey continued that evening at the newly opened **West Palm Cowboy Club** on Clematis Street. The 2-level restaurant and live music venue celebrates Florida's ranching roots through BBQ, handcrafted cocktails and entertainment. Grammy Award-winning producer and South Florida native Thomas Wesley—better known as Diplo—serves as the venue's musical director, helping shape its creative identity and programming.

The weekend concluded with brunch at **SeaHawk Prime by David Burke**, where waterfront views and elevated steakhouse classics provided a fitting finale. Together, the dining experiences highlighted the diversity of West Palm Beach's culinary scene and the ease with which advisors can tailor

All photos, clockwise from top: Two-bedroom accommodations at AKA West Palm; bird's-eye view of the city; Eataly food hall; a Keith Haring piece at the Norton Museum of Art; the Flagler Museum; Nora District.

recommendations to different travel styles and budgets.

The **AKA West Palm** property proved to be an ideal home base throughout the stay. The apartment-style accommodations offered the comforts of home in the heart of downtown, placing restaurants, nightlife and the waterfront within easy reach.

Two days weren't enough time to experience every corner of West Palm Beach, but it was enough to understand its rhythm.

This is a city best explored without an agenda packed too tightly. It's a place where visitors can discover public art between meals, stumble upon a favorite neighborhood hotspot or simply enjoy the luxury of slowing down. ■

Contact Information

Visit West Palm Beach: visitwpb.org

