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## Fort Lauderdale getaway: How to blend fun, sun and culture in this unique city

Discover the other side of Fort Lauderdale with these fascinating activities



Beach in Fort Lauderdale 2022 — Photo courtesy of Marla Cimini

On Southern Florida's scenic east coast, the city of Fort Lauderdale is known as a tropical paradise, with warm temperatures, indoor-outdoor dining and loads of activities for all ages. A popular beach destination, Fort Lauderdale is often called the "Venice of America" for its many canals throughout the Intracoastal Waterway.

The area is also famous for its long stretch of beautiful seashore lined with swaying palm trees, attracting visitors year-round who adore the soft golden sand and brilliant turquoise waters.

But there's more to explore in this sun-drenched beach town. On my recent visit to Fort Lauderdale in early 2022, I was pleasantly surprised to find fascinating cultural attractions, often hiding in plain sight – and it was delightful to combine a relaxing beach vacation with a dose of art appreciation and history.

Fort Lauderdale offers several ways to blend art and unique historical tours – alongside plenty of fun in the sun – with several diverse activities to ensure an exciting and memorable visit.

### Historic Stranahan House Museum



Historic Stranahan House — Photo courtesy of Marla Cimini

Experience a taste of “old Florida” by stepping back in time while touring the [Historic Stranahan House Museum](#), the oldest surviving home in Broward County. This quaint historical home, situated on the Intracoastal Waterway and overlooking the New River in the heart of the city, was built in 1901 by Fort Lauderdale’s “founding father,” Frank Stranahan.

Originally, this wood-frame structure with scenic views and shaded wraparound porches was a trading post, but over the years, it had also been transformed into a post office, the town hall and a private residence. This captivating tour, guided by a local historian, traces the home’s story from the early 1900s to the present day and provides a truly intriguing glimpse of local community life in Southern Florida.

Visits are by tour only and tours must be booked in advance. Admission / tour tickets: adults \$12 and students \$7. Visit the website to see other types of available tickets.

## NSU Art Museum



Interior of NSU Art Museum — Photo courtesy of Marla Cimini

An incredible destination for contemporary art, the [NSU Art Museum](#) is located in the center of town, and features an exceptional array of original paintings, sculptures and other fascinating works by noteworthy artists. The museum also invites art lovers to attend events throughout the year, showcasing speakers and special guests.

The building itself is a work of art: modern and spacious, with multiple rotating and permanent exhibits, focusing on innovative and significant works. Although visitors may find the museum to be an unexpected destination, local art enthusiasts know it's a treasure trove of artistic abundance.

The museum's current noteworthy exhibit is "Confrontation: Keith Haring and Pierre Alechinsky," a brilliant display shining a spotlight on the artists' relationship and insightful pieces, was developed specifically for NSU by curator Bonnie Clearwater. It's on display until October 2022. The museum offers free admission and extended hours on the first Thursday of every month.

## Water Taxi adventures



View from the water taxi — Photo courtesy of Marla Cimini

An optimal way to discover the most stunning views of Fort Lauderdale is with a leisurely cruise by [Water Taxi](#), arguably the best way to get around town, day or night. With many stops along the world-famous Intracoastal Waterway, the Water Taxi cruises are scenic, relaxing and fully narrated, so you can enjoy the setting and learn some historical facts about the incredibly gorgeous mansions and other landmarks along the way.

In addition to waterfront homes, you'll cruise by a state park, marinas, hotels, restaurants, bars and other local noteworthy businesses. Cruisers can settle in and stay for the entire loop, which is about a three-hour-long trip, or disembark at any stop to explore the local area and pick up the cruise later.

For a more comfortable cruise, choose the larger water taxi and sit on the top deck for a panoramic view, or relax inside in the air-conditioned shade. The best part? The water taxi offers beverages, snacks and has restrooms, so you can cruise around all day, admiring the views in style. Ticket price: adults \$35 and children \$15, with several other passes available on the website.

## Easy, breezy beach day



Fort Lauderdale beach and pool view — Photo courtesy of Marla Cimini

Beach lovers who wish to have a stress-free beach day can stay at the [Ritz Carlton Fort Lauderdale](#), an oceanfront property that offers easy, direct beach access. No need to carry your beach chairs and gear to the sand. Instead, guests of the hotel are treated to beach amenities upon request – free chairs, umbrellas and towels for daily use that are set up for you by the helpful hotel staff.

And later, when you decide to take a break from the sand and waves, just stroll up to the spacious pool deck overlooking the ocean, and enjoy a refreshing dip in the water, or sip a craft cocktail at the outdoor bar that offers panoramic views of the beachfront. Beachside towel and chair service is complimentary for guests and is available from 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

## Fort Lauderdale's dining scene



Plates at Evelyn's restaurant — Photo courtesy of Maria Cimini

Dining in Fort Lauderdale is a wonderful adventure, and you can find nearly every cuisine within walking distance of the beach. One popular standout is the lively Coconuts, located on the water. This legendary establishment is home to a fun bar serving up tropical beverages, and it has an extensive seafood menu with fan favorites, including their popular “Scoobies,” a delightful crab appetizer.

In the Las Olas part of town, the [Harborwood Urban Kitchen and Bar](#) is a stylish, spacious indoor-outdoor restaurant with modern small plates perfect for sharing. For a high-end experience, [Evelyn's](#), located in the newly opened [Four Seasons Hotel](#), offers a variety of Eastern Mediterranean specialties by chef Brandon Salomon in a casually elegant ambiance overlooking the swimming pool and the Atlantic Ocean beyond.