

SEVEN TO PLAY IN MIAMI

It might be known for South Beach and Ocean Drive, but Miami offers so much more than the oiled bodies of Muscle Beach – great golf, for instance. *Travel Trends Golf* explores seven of the best places to play golf in the Floridian city

WORDS DANIEL PIKE

1 The Biltmore Hotel

Standing on the first tee at the Biltmore Hotel's golf course you can imagine the 1920s gliteratti watching on from the verandah, sipping prohibition cocktails and puffing on Cubano cigars.

The hotel was a jazz-age icon of the Florida boom years, attracting A-listers, politicians and even gangsters, including the legendary Al Capone. They'd come here to eat, drink, mingle, make deals, break deals, take in its famed entertainment and, occasionally, shoot people. It was here, in 1929, that Capone's bouncer shot gangster Thomas 'Fatty' Walsh in the casino on the building's 13th floor — it's said that Fatty's ghost still haunts the hotel lift.

Location-wise, the Biltmore Hotel is the centrepiece of the residential suburb of Coral Gables, which has an identity different from the rest of Miami. It's a bolthole of Mediterranean revival, villas of Spanish and Italian influence punctuated by fountains, and lined by canopies of banyan trees, just 12 miles from the brash glamour of Miami Beach. This is why it's nicknamed 'The City Beautiful'.

The gangster days are, thankfully, long gone, so you can relax in the mammoth 23,000sq ft pool — the

largest pool on the East Coast — or take in one of the five culinary experiences including Palme d'Or, recognised by Zagat as one of the best restaurants in the country, complete with its own culinary academy if you fancy a go yourself.

And then there's the golf. The par 71 golf course, the work of the great Donald Ross, sprawls out from beneath the shadow of the elaborate Moorish bell tower of the hotel — incidentally, a replica of the Giralda in Seville.

The course is interposed with tricky dog-legs throughout. Standing on the tee-box at the ninth, holding a six iron in one hand and a driver in the other is a fork in the road moment. Always taking the 'Tiger' line on this course might not be the best policy, but if you do there are families of iguanas to be found if you head off-line.

It's also a fine example of resort golf in the US — the canals which used to ferry visitors to the ocean are now waterways which dissect the manicured fairways making this a challenge, but rewarding if you play with good course management. Having hosted major junior tournaments over the years the likes of Tiger, Bubba, Sergio and Rickie have played these fairways. It's now host to the Jim Mclean Golf School, having won it over from Trump National Doral. ▶



Biltmore Hotel



The Biltmore

The world-class tuition is one of a number of big changes at the Miami resort. Another is a \$2m renovation of the course itself that'll create more challenging signature holes and take it to over 7,100 yards, bringing it to Championship-standard golf. The practice facilities, already equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, a well-known feature of Jim Mclean's meticulous teaching approach, is getting a bit of a refurb, too.

biltmorehotel.com, green fees from £111 (visitor)

2 The Blue Monster, Trump National Doral Miami

Recently redesigned by architect Gil Hanse, this is imposing with long-flowing fairways in a course of 7,590 yards. Deep bunkers surround undulating greens; length and guile is a must with the 18th hole ranked as one of the most difficult on the PGA tour. Walking in the footsteps of Jack Nicklaus, Greg Norman and Tiger Woods — this is the toughest in Miami.

trumphotels.com/miami, green fees from £190

3 The Golden Palm, Trump National Doral Miami

The Golden Palm Course (formerly known as Gold Course) is one of the four 18-hole courses at the Trump National Doral Miami. Narrow tree-lined fairways with intelligently placed bunkers and water hazards reward accuracy. The finishing hole has a spectacular island green — a favourite way to finish a round. This course gives a true Floridian experience while being more accessible for players of any skill level — and wallet size.

trumphotels.com/miami, green fees from £150 ▶



The Blue Monster, Trump National Doral Miami



The Golden Palm, Trump National Doral Miami

4 Crandon Park Golf Course

This has become one of the signature public golf courses in the area and is just 10 minutes from downtown Miami. A scenic course with perfect views of Biscayne Bay, it's punctuated by saltwater lakes and mangrove thickets, which make it a challenge. Robert von Hagge and Bruce Devlin entice you into the spectacular shots — if you like dog-legs over water, this is your jam. With great practice facilities, it's ideal for all standards or just a spot of practice. golfcrandon.com, green fees from £52

5 La Gorce Country Club

As membership is invitation-only this isn't the most accessible golf course in Miami, but it has true prestige. The course is known for being immaculate with rousing views of the Miami Beach skyline. A Robert Trent Jones redesign, the landscaped fairways are framed by Australian pines and royal palms. If walking in the footsteps of Ben Hogan and Sam Snead is your thing, then this is one for you. If you fancy a spot of croquet after, check out the club's lawns. lagorcecc.com

6 The Soffer Golf Course, Turnberry Isle

The two 18-hole championship courses have received huge amounts of investments and it's money well spent — another Robert Trent Jones course, reimagined by Raymond Floyd in 2007. With a mixture of narrow, winding holes with undulating fairways dotted with water hazards, accuracy is rewarded, and at 7,000 yards presents a challenge to seasoned golfers. The beautiful landscaping among the trees make this pleasing on the eye, with the 18th-hole signature waterfall a great way to end the round. turnberryislemiami.com, green fees from £136

7 Miami International Links, Melreese Country Club

Boasting a championship layout, with rolling fairways and large undulating greens, it's a real challenge — and that's before you consider the five lakes. The signature 14th hole known as 'heartbreak ridge' is lined by water from tee to green which makes it as tricky as it's scenic. ■ internationallinksgolfclub.com, green fees from £95



The Soffer Golf Course

FOUR NON-GOLF THINGS TO DO IN MIAMI

① MILLIONAIRES' ROW CRUISE

Miami is known for the aesthetics and glamour of South Beach — a boat trip around Millionaires' Row will give you a glimpse of this lifestyle. Beyond checking out where Al Capone used to live and where classic films such as *Scarface* were filmed, there's a lot to see of Miami from the water including the Port of Miami, Fisher Island and the evolving city skyline.

② LITTLE HAVANA — CUBAN COFFEE AND CIGARS

For a true taste of Miami take some time to enjoy the sites and sounds of Little Havana. This is the perfect locale for a walking or food tour — enjoy the community atmosphere while sipping a Cuban coffee and watching a cigar being rolled by hand. It's a great opportunity to learn a bit about Castro and the exiled Cuban communities. If you're around till dusk, check out the Ball and Chain for a salsa lesson from locals.

③ DAY TRIP TO THE EVERGLADES

While it's one of the more clichéd Floridian activities, a fanboat ride through the mangrove swamps, is a must. With its unique ecosystem, the Everglade National Park is different from anywhere else in the world, and this trip comes with the added bonus of the exhilaration of being spun across the murky waters as you explore.



④ WYNWOOD WALLS

Why not take a golf cart tour of this newly thriving neighbourhood art district? Learn about the history, visit one of the breweries and, of course, check out the open-air street art galleries.

IMAGE: Getty