



MIAMI'S ART DECO ARCHITOUR

A new style for the modern age, art deco was first glimpsed in American architecture in the 1920s, in the shimmering skyscrapers of Manhattan. The aesthetic quickly spread, and was adopted by architects and designers who moulded its forms and motifs to suit the locale. In Miami, art deco reached its apotheosis in South Beach, the tip of a barrier island developed by John Collins, Carl Fisher and the Lummus brothers from 1913 onwards. Over the next two decades, money and celebrity arrived in the newly formed neighbourhood, and the first beachfront hotels began to spring up, their coloured facades reflecting the hues of Florida's sub-tropical climate.

By the 1930s, American art deco had a highly streamlined appearance, a style called Streamline Moderne, echoing the era of speed and travel that had unfolded, on sleek ocean liners, the first transatlantic flights and the road. Two key architects to bring the aesthetic to South Beach were Henry Hohauser and Lawrence Murray Dixon, who created several hotels, including Dixon's 1936 The Tides (1220 Ocean Drive), and Hohauser's 1937 Park Central (640 Ocean Drive) and 1940 Raleigh (1775 Collins Avenue), whose pool/bar became a hip Hollywood hangout. Designed by Yugoslav-born architect Anton Skislewicz, the 1939 Breakwater Hotel embodied the look, with its cobalt blue frontage, wide horizontal floors and tall central feature.

Borne out in sorbet shades, porthole windows and striking silhouettes, art deco lent South Beach glamour, fuelling its appeal as a sun-drenched, style-savvy destination. In the coming decades, the area suffered ups and downs, but since its art deco quarter was designated a historic district in 1979, it's been a story of steady gentrification, with much of this unique and vibrant architecture undergoing restoration. SoBe is chic once again for the 21st-century.

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