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Relocation Guide to Miami, Florida

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WELCOME AND OVERVIEW



Miami skyline courtesy of [wikimedia.org](https://www.wikimedia.org)

The history of Miami reveals that the city gets its name from the word “Mayaimi”, meaning big lake in the local Native American language and is thought to be referring to Lake Okeechobee. The area was first occupied by The Tequestas when the first European ships landed on the coast of South Florida. A Spanish explorer named Ponce de Leon came in search of the fountain of youth and later claimed the place for his native country Spain. Florida remained under the control of Spain for almost two and a half centuries. The Spanish introduced modern weaponry and brought with them diseases that caused the native Tequestas to disappear. In 1818, the Seminole Indian Wars started and following its conclusion, the United States bought Florida from Spain in 1821 for \$5 million.

The modern history of Miami began in 1896 when Henry Flagler constructed the railroad to southeast Florida. With this construction, rapid development occurred in the area, and the next century brought various drainage canals and city expansion. Miami changed drastically and turned into a wonderful resort, with great beaches and an advanced transportation network. It’s hard to believe that 100 years ago it was a mosquito-infested swampland, with an Indian trading post on the Miami River.

Greater Miami is many destinations in one. At its best, it offers an unparalleled multicultural experience: melodic Latin and Caribbean tongues, international cuisines and cultural events, and an unmistakable joie de vivre—all against a beautiful beach backdrop. In Little Havana, the air is tantalizing with the perfume of strong Cuban coffee. Grab a Cuban sandwich and ride the vintage carousel at Virginia Key Beach Park. In Coconut Grove, Caribbean steel drums ring out during the Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival. Experience the bustle of South Beach and its Art Deco District. Miami’s nightlife is vibrant, thanks to a strong Latin influence and spicy salsa culture. Miami Beach, on 17 islands in Biscayne Bay, is sometimes considered America's Riviera, luring refugees from northern winters with its warm sunshine, sandy beaches, and shady palms.

Miami-Dade Overview

Miami is the county seat of Miami-Dade County. The 44th-most populated city proper in the United States, with a population of 430,332, it is the most populous metropolis in the Southeastern United States after Washington, D.C. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Miami's greater metro area is the fourth-largest urban area in the United States, with a population of around 5.5 million.

- [Official Website of Miami](#)
- [Mayor of Miami-Dade County](#)
- Population of City of Miami: 430,332
- Miami-Dade County: 2,662,874
- Total area of city: 55.27 sq miles(143.1km²)
- The sales tax in Miami-Dade County is 7%.
- [Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreation Department](#)
- [Miami Public Library](#)
- [Weather Today in Miami](#)
- [Miami-Dade Recycling Services](#)

History of Miami

- [Miami Time Line](#)

What to See, Sightseeing Tours, Value Packages and Passes, Tourist Information

- [Best of Miami- TripAdvisor](#)
- [Miami Travel Guide](#)
- [CNN Insider's guide to Miami](#)
- [Miami Tourist Guide](#)
- [Guide to Greater Miami and its beaches](#)

Where to Find Arts & Entertainment

Miami events offer 24/7 excitement. From sports games to world-class dance, theater, concerts and shows, Miami's performances and festivals highlight the best in entertainment, music, film and fashion.

- [Miami calendar of festivals](#)
- [Miami calendar of general events](#)

Where to Eat

Foodies and chefs alike herald Miami for its unique New World cuisine. Created in the 1990's, the cuisine alternatively known as New World, Nuevo Latino or "Floribbean" cuisine blends local produce, Latin American and Caribbean culinary tradition and the technical skills required in European cooking

- [TripAdvisor's Travelers Choice Top 25 restaurants](#)
- [The Eater's 38 Essential Miami Restaurants](#)
- [Urbanspoon's guide to Miami eating](#)

If many of Miami's premiere restaurants don't fit into your daily budget, consider eating during Miami Restaurant Month (better known as [Miami Spice](#)) when restaurants offer terrific deals in August and September. A cool area to eat out is [Lincoln Road](#) and [Miracle Mile](#). They both have many hopping restaurants in the neighborhood that are worth checking out.

Tipping & Sales Tax

When you eat in a restaurant in America, you are expected to leave your server a tip, as it is not included. In a bar, café, or modest restaurant, 15% of the total bill is acceptable. However, in an upscale restaurant (fine dining), a tip calculated on 20% of the total bill is now the norm in Florida. Tips are also required when using a taxi, valet parking and other services. The tips tend to vary depending on what service you are paying for so make sure to check [this site](#) before leaving. In addition, be aware of paying tips twice since some restaurants/services include the tip in the price.

The sales tax in Miami-Dade County is 7%.

Utilities

- [AT&T \(formerly BellSouth\)](#)
- [Comcast](#)
- [Florida Power & Light](#)
- [Miami-Dade Water and Sewer](#)
- [Florida City Gas](#)
- [TECO/ Peoples Gas](#)

Local Resources

- [American Red Cross-Miami Chapter](#)
- [Humane Society of Miami](#)
- [Miami-Dade Animal Services Department](#)
- [Miami-Dade County Answer Center](#)
- [Miami-Dade Consumer Services \(Report price gouging\)](#)
- [Miami Parking Authority \(MPA\)](#)

Urgent Care Centers

An Urgent Care Center is different than a Hospital Emergency Room. An Emergency room would be in an absolute emergency. You may visit an Urgent Care Center if, for example, you have a terrible ear ache and need medicine immediately, but your Primary Care Physician's office is closed. Many Urgent Care Centers have extended hours and are open early morning until late evening during the week and also some weekend hours. Be sure to refer back to your health insurance company to clarify which urgent care centers and primary care physicians you are allowed to visit using your health insurance. Your insurance card should have a toll-free 1-800 number on the back for you to call and ask questions and clarify which urgent care center would be closest for you. Please always carry your insurance card with you!

Hospital & Clinics

- [Jackson Memorial Health System](#)
- [Baptist Health South Florida](#)
- [Nicklaus Children's Hospital](#)
- [Mount Sinai Medical Center](#)
- [Larkin Community Hospital](#)
- [Urgent Care Centers Link](#)

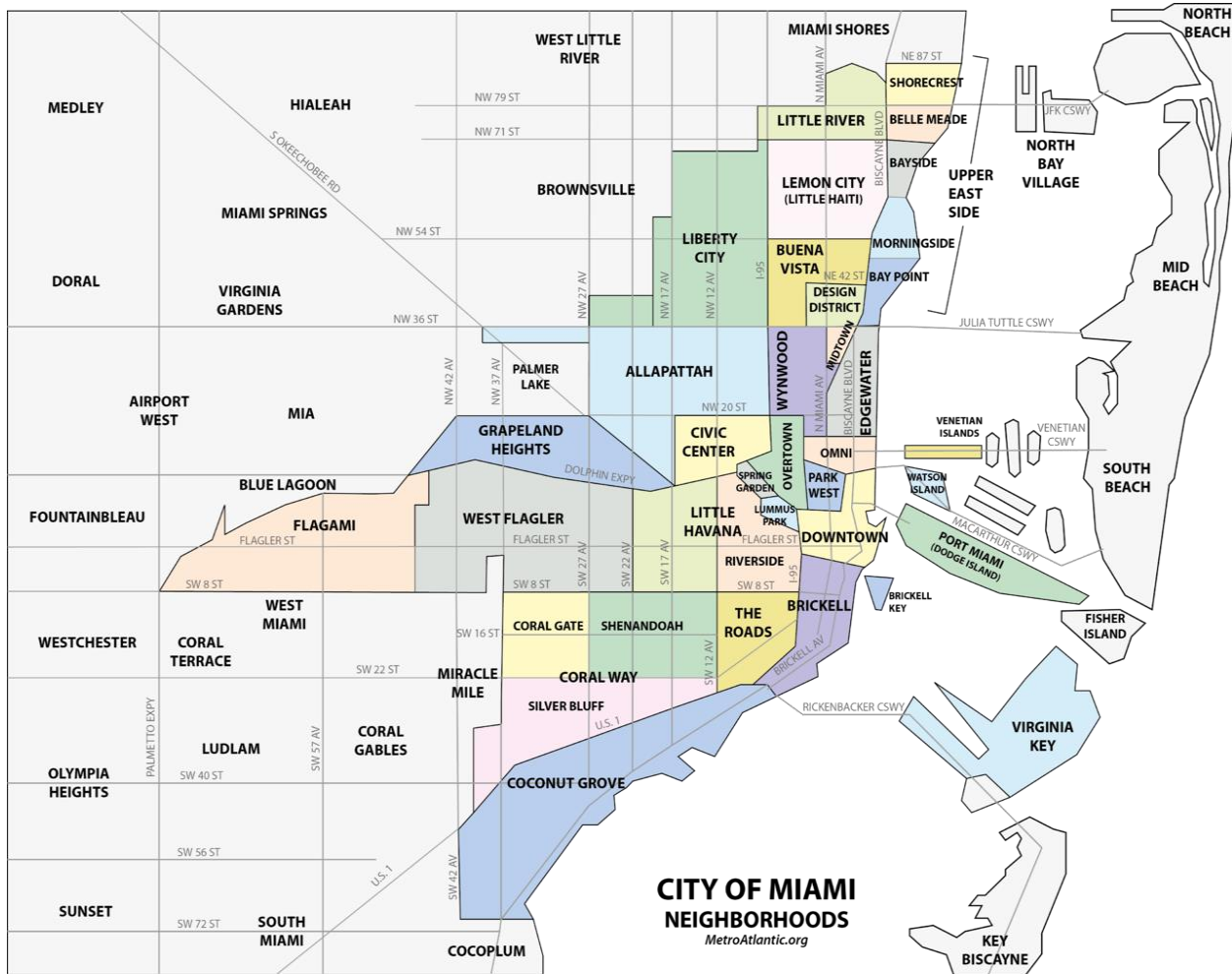
To find a doctor in your area go to [WebMD](#)

Pharmacies

There are several major pharmacy chains in the area, found on nearly every block on commercial streets. These pharmacies are also general stores and carry a large selection of cleaning, house care, pet care, and other supplies. Click on "Store Locator" and enter your zip (postal) code to find the pharmacy near you. Many pharmacies are open 24 hours. Check for hours of operation.

- [CVS](#)
- [Rite Aid](#)
- [Walgreens](#)

MAP OF MIAMI



Miami neighborhood map courtesy of [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miami_neighborhoods)

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY
DIAL 911 FOR
FIRE, POLICE & AMBULANCE**

Language line: If the person calling 911 is unable to speak English, they can tell the operator what language they speak. The 911 Operator will have an interpreter on the line within one minute to assist with the translation.

They will ask for the following information so keep this page close to your phone:

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____

If you accidentally call 911, please do not hang up. The police will automatically be dispatched to your home to make sure there are no problems. Explain to the Operator the call was an accident.

[POISON CONTROL](#) (407) 841-5222
[ANIMAL POISON CONTROL](#) 1-888-426-4435

[CLOSEST CONSULATE OFFICE](#) _____
PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN _____
WORK PHONE NUMBER _____

Important Numbers:

- English Police Non-Emergency 305-476-5423
- 311 or 305-468-5900 (Water outage, down trees, public works)
- 511 (state-wide traffic information)
- Miami Dade Special Needs 305-468-5400
- Transit Information 305-770-3131

Hurricane Preparedness Tips:

It is imperative that you have necessary preparations in place to be prepared for Hurricane season (June 1st – November 30th). By preparing in advance you'll invest a little time up front, but you will have things in order and can devote time to last minute, less important items should you find yourself under a Hurricane Watch or Warning.

One good way to ease this stress is to have some plans laid in advance. Just think how you will feel having the peace of mind of knowing you are prepared while everyone else in the hot zone is scurrying about trying to buy supplies that are dwindling or non-existent.

Ideally, everyone should have shutters and a secure way to lock down your home. But you can at least make sure you are prepared in every other way.

1. Make sure to inventory your valuables. Make lists and videotape. Then keep this list in a safety deposit box. This includes property deeds, marriage / birth certificates, social security cards, stocks and bonds and other portfolio information, passports, wills medical records and insurance policies.
2. Make a reference list of everything you would absolutely want to take with you should you have to evacuate your home. Include photo albums, important documents, files, jewelry and other precious mementos. You will surely forget something if you had to get out quickly.
3. Compile a list of supports including family and friends that you want to stay in touch with throughout the storm. Decide on who will take what roles, and where and when to meet should phone service be out. Many people will use an out of town contact that may be easier to reach than a local one.
4. If your area is placed under a Hurricane Watch, make sure you wash all dishes and run the dishwasher. Also make sure all the laundry is washed and clean sheets and towels are being used. You don't know when power may be restored and this will avoid you running out of clean clothes too soon.
5. Be sure to have cash on you. You may not be able to find an operating ATM after the storm.
6. Fill up your car with gas. Purchase a portable tank to bring extra gas. Evacuation traffic is slow.
7. Make sure you have adequate supplies such as food and water (1 gallon per day, per person) for everyone in your household. Don't forget the manual can opener! A good rule of thumb is to have enough supplies to last you for seven days.
8. Be sure you have plenty of supplies for baby including formula (powdered) diapers clean bottles and wipes and baby food.
9. Don't forget to have all medications you use or may use filled and readily available.
10. Battery powered radio or television and flashlights. Don't forget batteries for each.
11. Purchase a car charger for your phone
12. Don't forget to make arrangements for your pets and to have adequate supplies for them as well.
13. Also, take adequate measures to account for climate changes.

The summer is a perfect time to tackle any impending projects you have been putting off. Because the world seems to slow down around us, many people are vacationing and school is out, it is a great time to delve into these matters.

US Leasing/Housing Guide

A lease is an agreement that outlines the obligations of the owner and the tenants of a house or apartment. It is a legally binding document, so it is important for you to know the exact terms of the lease agreement before you sign it. Please do not sign a lease without reviewing it with your IOR DS Consultant.

Types of rental properties

- **Apartment**
An apartment is rented from a company or individual that owns the property. Apartment buildings are usually multistory with people over, under and beside each other with common hallways or walk ways. Apartments are often rented from a company or individual in the form of an individual lease with no bearing on the other tenants of the building (besides noise complaints, property damage, etc.)
- **Studio Apartments**
A studio apartment is basically a one room apartment with sleeping, dining and kitchen all in one room plus a full bathroom. A “convertible” or “alcove” studio may have a nook or area which can be sectioned off separately for sleeping.
- **Condominium**
A condo is a communally owned estate and the owners share the ownership of the common areas such as grounds and hallways. Condominiums may be apartment style buildings or town house type buildings, but condo owners do not usually own the land. Condo owners are required to pay monthly common maintenance charges, although these might be reflected in your rental rate (it is important to clarify this with your landlord).
- **Townhouse**
A Townhouse is a kind of structure where the individual properties are flush against each other with tiny front and back “yards” and shared walls between them. Almost always they are multistory single family. Usually townhouse owners own the property under their townhouse.
- **Single Family Houses**
Single-family houses are free-standing rental properties that are habited by one person or a family. As you do not share this rental space with any other tenants, single-family homes offer the most amount of privacy. Homes also often come with a parking spot and/or garage space, but may require that you handle certain maintenance items (i.e. your lawn, minor repairs, etc.)

Rental Agents

In most situations, your IOR consultant will partner with a local realtor to have access to the most current and extensive property listings as well as the realtor's expertise in preparing and negotiating leases. This agent receives a commission for their assistance, in most U.S. locations this commission is paid by the Landlord, not the tenant. Your IOR DS Consultant will discuss this with you.

Renter's Rights

Tenants who lease or rent property are protected against discrimination by [The Fair Housing Act](#). If you think your rights have been violated, you may write a letter or telephone the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) office nearest you. You have one year after the alleged violation to file a complaint with HUD, but you should file as soon as possible.

While you can generally expect the same service from landlords, it's important to know your state's laws. Each state and most major cities have their own tenant rights, laws and protections. Here are [Florida's](#).

You can also visit the [HUD website here for a full guide to renters' rights by states](#).

If your rental property ever suffers any defects that make your place uninhabitable, your landlord has a duty to fix it. While some apartments let you make online requests for repairs, as well as provide a phone number for "emergencies," always make sure you document your request in writing. The landlord will then have a certain amount of time to make those repairs.

Privacy

You have the right to privacy. While the landlord owns the property, they can't access it anytime they want. All states have laws stating renters have a right to privacy while renting. Pretty much the only time the landlord can come into your rental without permission or notice is when they're responding to an emergency that threatens injury or property damage. Any other time the landlord wants to enter your apartment, they need to have your permission and in most cases give you 24-hours' notice before entering.

What to expect from the landlord:

In most states, you are legally entitled to:

- Safe structural elements including floors, walls, roofs and secure doors and windows.
- Privacy as described above.
- All electrical, plumbing, heating and air conditioning systems function.
- Working hot and cold water.
- Exterminating infestations of rodents and other insects.
- Access to trash receptacles.
- Landlords cannot discriminate based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities.
- Apartment buildings sometimes come with laundry and dryer machines in the basement.
- Water, electricity and gas bills are up to you to pay. **Your IOR DS consultant will assist you with this process.**

Utilities and Appliances

Your IOR DS Consultant will assist you or provide information on connecting your utilities. It is possible some will be included in your rent, but typically most are not.

If you are moving from Europe to North America, you might be surprised at the relatively large size of the kitchen appliances in your accommodation, especially the refrigerator! It may also surprise some expats that properties are rented **with** appliances. In the U.S. it is standard for properties to include a refrigerator, stove and oven. Properties may also include a dishwasher, microwave, washer and dryer depending on the location, size and price point.

****Note that you will need a social security number in order to register and pay for utilities****

Recycling

Miami-Dade County provides curbside [recycling services for accepted products](#) to residents.



The Lease Process

Review your housing budget with your IOR DS Consultant

Your IOR DS Consultant can help you understand what kind of property you can afford. You also need to take into account that you may be responsible for some of the utility costs of your rental.

Know what you want

What are you looking for in a property? Do you want a studio or a single bedroom? Maybe you want to rent a single family home? Do you need the property to come with appliances, including washer and dryer? Do you want it to be close to school or your work? Do you want it to be within walking distance of retail, like groceries or coffee shops? Are you looking for a child friendly area?

Keep in mind that outside of the city center in major cities, there is not much public transportation and most locals drive everywhere.

Identify potential apartments

IOR offers home finding services to aid you with this process. Your consultant may work with a local broker who will help to organize appointments and visit properties. They will also assist in the rental application and the leasing process.

Common Abbreviations and Acronyms used in rental housing listings

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
24-hr mtn	24-hour emergency maintenance
AC or A/C	Air conditioning
Appls	Appliances

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
LA	Living area
LR	Living room
MBR	Master bedroom

Apt	Apartment
BA	Bathroom
BR	Bedroom
Bsmt	Basement
CAC	Central air conditioning
DA	Dining area
Det	Detached
Dk	Deck
DR	Dining room
Dw (D/w)	Dishwasher
Eff	Efficiency
EiK	Eat-in kitchen
Fin bsmt	Finished basement
FDR	Formal dining room
FHA	Fair Housing Act
FMR	Fair market rent
FP	Floorplan
Gar	Garage
H/A	Handicapped accessible
H/W	Hardwood floors
Hi ceil	High ceilings
HVAC	Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning

MBTH	Master bathroom
Neg	Negotiable
Ofc	Office
OSP	Off-street parking
Pkg	Parking
PM	Property manager (management)
Pvt	Private
Pwdr rm	Powder room (1/2 bath)
RE	Real estate
Renov	Renovated
Rf	Roof
Rm	Room
SF	Single-family
SFA	Single-family attached
SFD	Single-family detached
Sp, Pl (S/p)	Swimming pool
Sq. ft	Square feet
Th (T/H)	Townhouse
Vw (vu)	View
W/A	Wheelchair accessible
W/W	Wall-to-wall carpeting

Visit

Make this process as efficient as possible by visiting as many potential properties as you can in one or two days. Try to go sometime during the week if possible. Your IOR DS consultant will work with you to set an appropriate schedule and to ensure that the properties you visit meet your needs as closely as possible.

What to do once you're there

As you look at the rental unit, be sure to ask a lot of questions. While you should keep small concerns to yourself about the unit while looking at it, feel free to ask the landlord or apartment manager any questions you might have that will help in your decision. Here are some possible questions you may consider asking:

- What's the monthly rent?
- Are any utilities included with the rent?
- How much is the security deposit?
- When is rent due? Do you have auto-pay?
- What's the make-up of the other tenants? Are they mainly younger students? Married couples with families? Older folks?
- What's the parking situation like? Do you pay for a parking spot?
- Do you take care of small maintenance issues or am I responsible for some of the repairs in the property?
- Am I able to re-paint the walls or make other modifications?

Again, be friendly and polite when you ask these questions.

The Application

The next step in the leasing process for an apartment is to submit a rental application for the location you want. The manager or landlord will be able to give you the application as well as anything else that they may need to have filled out. Your IOR DS Consultant will assist with this process. For a single family home there will likely be a rental application.

You will need your passport, Social Security number, Visa and proof of employment. Some landlords may charge you an application fee which could be between \$20 to \$400 dollars, depending on the landlord. This could be a combination of an application fee and move-in fee.

Once you've done this, it can take up to a few days to hear back from the property manager. Once your application has been approved the lease approval process will begin with IOR and likely your employer.

Signing the lease

DO NOT SIGN THE LEASE until your IOR DS Consultant has reviewed it in full and given their approval.

The lease is a binding contract, so it is very important to pay attention as a leasing agent goes over it with you. It is perfectly normal for you to take your time and read all the fine print for yourself. If you are working with an IOR DS consultant, make sure to talk with them and receive approval before signing. You will also be given a copy of the lease to take with you and keep for your records, but it is very important to know everything included in your lease from the start.

Some things to look for in a lease:

- Term of the lease and any important dates such as when the rent is due.
- Extra fees for parking spaces or storage, garbage collection and pets.
- Information regarding utility providers and whether you or the landlord is responsible for those bills.
- Notification requirements in case of renewal.
- Requirements/responsibilities of the tenants to do routine repairs such as lawn maintenance, cleaning or notification of repairs.
- Clauses that allow the landlord to change the terms of the lease after it is signed.
- Restrictions that would prevent you from living normally or comfortably in the home.

Sometimes landlords will ask for a security deposit before you sign the lease. This is normal, but you shouldn't pay in cash. Make sure all payments are made out as a check or money order just in case.

What to expect from the lease

Most leases in the United States include the following or a variation thereof:

- Your employer requires that all leases include a Break Clause in case you are transferred for work or personal needs.
- Contracts will often be for periods of a year or more.
- Minimum stay. Typically three fourths of your lease contract time. If you choose to move out before this date, you will lose your security deposit. If you move out afterwards, you are still required to give a specified number of days notice.
- Security Deposit. Landlords will expect you to leave them with a deposit (usually about one to two month's rent) that they will hold for the duration of your lease. You will receive your security deposit back at the end of the lease provided you don't break any specific clauses in your lease, such as moving out without proper notice, not paying rent, causing damages to the property, etc.
- Landlords should not be given unchecked access to your apartment. If there isn't anything in your lease about landlord's rights to enter the leased premises, suggest the following clause:

Entry by the Landlord. Landlord or his agent will not enter Tenant's home except to deal with an emergency; to make necessary or agreed repairs; to supply necessary or agreed services; or to

show the unit to potential purchasers, tenants, or repair persons. Unless there is an emergency, Landlord will give Tenant at least 24 hours' written notice of the date, time, and purpose of the intended entry and will schedule entries during normal business hours, Monday–Friday.

Most landlords will be hard-pressed to say no to such a reasonable clause. If the landlord refuses, it's a sure sign that he won't be reasonable in other respects, too. Continue on in your housing search.

Moving In

On your selected move-in date, after the lease has been signed, and deposits have been paid...you should be given your keys and more than likely a move-in form to fill out. Your IOR DS Consultant will assist you with an initial walk through of your apartment. Look for dings in the walls, cracked windows or other irregularities and report them on this form. This will indicate that these things were there before you moved in and you will not be held responsible for them at the end of the lease term.

Get Renter's Insurance

Renter's insurance covers any loss to your personal property due to robbery or accidents. It also covers any damage you might cause to other tenant's property. For example, let's say your washing machine springs a leak and water seeps through the floor and ruins your neighbor's antique dresser. Renter's insurance would cover that.

Renter's insurance will cost approximately about \$15-125 a month, less if you tack it onto another policy (like auto) you have with an insurance company. A few popular options are [Allstate](#) and [StateFarm](#).

When relocating internationally, your children's education is of great concern. IOR eases this concern by exposing you to the various school options available for your child and helping you to work within the framework of options to find the best solution for your family.

I. Overview and Philosophy of the United States Educational System

In most U.S. locations you will have the choice of sending your children to either a public or private school. A public school must accept your child for enrollment if you live within its designated district. A private school may have a general curriculum similar to that of public schools, but may or may not accept your child depending on availability of space, your child's prior academic history, language ability in English, or the result of entrance exams. Private schools charge a fee, which can be quite high. If you are considering private school, be sure you have a clear understanding of your employer's policy regarding reimbursement. In the U.S. approximately 85% of the children attend public schools for ages 5 to 13, and approximately 93% of the children attend public school at the high school level. Many, though not all, private schools are parochial, or religiously affiliated schools.

A third option called 'charter school' is sometimes available. Charter Schools are similar to public schools in that they are free, non-religious, publicly funded, and are held to state and federal academic standards. Each charter school is governed by its own local school community, which often includes parents and teachers - rather than a district. This freedom allows teachers to be more innovative, and communities to shape their local school. Charter schools can set their own hours and adjust their curriculum to fit their student needs, and give teachers the opportunity to experiment with next-generation teaching models including technology and the virtual classroom. Charter schools typically admit students by random lottery and do not restrict enrollment based on location, academic achievement, or other factors private schools may consider.

Most Americans, regardless of their level of education and income, send their children to public schools. Because each town or community typically has its own school system funded by local municipal taxes and state revenues, residents in an area with a higher tax base can usually be assured of quality public education. IOR is very conscientious about placing assignees and their families in areas with good public school systems.

Private schools do not receive state revenue, although they may be entitled to assistance with transporting students and providing for special needs such as speech therapy and assistance of the learning disabled. Private schools are funded through tuition paid by the student's parents. Typically, there are additional fees for books, uniforms and school supplies, and the parents are usually solicited for additional charitable donations. There may also be book or activity fees at public schools.

The public education system in the U.S. is administered by local and state government, rather than by the federal government. Each state has a board of education which sets policy for all school districts and standards which all students must achieve. In addition, each local district has a board of education which sets local policy and curriculum within the parameters set forth by the state.

School districts can provide specialized programs and services for children with special needs. The general philosophy of education in the United States is to educate the entire diverse, ethnically mixed population with equal educational opportunity for all, while serving the educational needs of the individual student.

If you choose public education for your child, the particular school your child attends is determined by the school district boundaries containing your residential address. The school may or may not be within walking distance to your home. Generally, if the distance to the school is greater than one mile, the school district provides bus transportation to and from school. For those children who do not live far enough away from the school for bus service but are too far to walk comfortably, parents may have the option of paying for bus transportation, or they may choose to drive their children to and from school. Very often parents form 'car pools', sharing the responsibility of driving groups of children.

Generally private schools do not have residential boundaries for their students' families. In most cases, parents rely on car pools to ease the burden of transporting their students to and from school. In selecting your home, consider the driving distance and time to and from the private school.

Ultimately, the school your children attend is determined by your residential address, so it is a good idea to include visits to potential schools and properties in your pre-trip visit. Your pre-trip visit will consist of selected sample houses in a variety of communities, along with information, or perhaps visits, to the appropriate schools. However, there may be a limited selection of homes available within each community. It is possible you may find a school you like, but there may not be any available housing options within that school's enrollment radius. We will show you housing in school districts with proven academic standards, but be aware there are cases when certain schools are unavailable due to housing concerns.

If you are considering a private school, you may wish to visit it as well as a public school to compare. It would be advisable, however, to first determine if the private school has space available for your child. Additionally, you will want to know the amount of tuition and fees for the school, as that may be a factor in your decision.

II. Academic Standards

A. Curriculum:

The overriding objective of elementary and secondary education, public or private, is to prepare students for higher learning and future employment. Each school district or private school will have a unique curriculum which meets the above overriding goals.

Elementary School:

The elementary years (kindergarten through fifth grade) focus on fundamental academic skills, language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics in addition to introduction to technology, art, music, physical education, and sometimes foreign languages. Students' personal development is energized through emphasizing strong work habits which provide a positive feeling toward learning.

Middle School:

Middle School helps children in early adolescence (sixth through eighth grade) transition from elementary to high school and from childhood into young adulthood. The structure of the school day includes contact with several teachers who specialize in their subject matter; students usually move from one classroom to another. Curricular content focuses on expansion of skills in math, science, reading, writing and social studies. Further exploration of foreign languages, practical and fine arts, music, health, physical education and computer literacy are also provided. Middle school students are able to enhance their formal education by participation in school sponsored adult supervised competitive athletics and a variety of clubs and special interest groups.

High School:

The premise of elementary and middle schools is to prepare students for the academic, social and physical challenges of high school. All high schools maintain defined academic requirements for graduation; however, great flexibility of classes is usually available within this framework. Most schools provide more challenging academic courses entitled honors or advanced placement which award college credit to successful students. High school extracurricular and athletic activities are more competitive than those found at lower levels and often provide talented students with opportunities continue this activity in college or university.

B. Grading Systems/Assessment of Child Progress

Schools typically report students' progress to parents with written report cards, which may be either mailed or carried home by the student. Many schools also set one or two days aside each semester for parent/teacher conferences. These conferences are an opportunity for parents to meet with their children's teachers and hear the teacher's evaluations of their student's performance in school. At the elementary school level, where children usually have one primary teacher, a teacher conference may last from fifteen minutes to an hour in length. At the middle school and high school levels, you may meet with your child's teachers for a period of five or ten

minutes. If you need additional time with the teacher, you may schedule a follow-up visit allowing time for a more complete discussion. It is a good idea to participate fully in teacher conferences. Your children's teachers may be able to provide valuable insight regarding your children's academic and social adjustments. Should there be concerns, they may be able to assist you with helpful suggestions of additional resources to contact.

C. Standardized Testing

Challenged to prepare students for higher learning and future employment, all school districts and private schools utilize standardized testing to measure student progress over time and compare themselves to national standards. Such tests are prepared by national groups of parents and educators as well as business and academic leaders. Tests vary from state to state, but typically students in prescribed grade levels (for example, grades 3, 6, 8 and 10) are tested in the areas of reading, mathematics, writing science and social science. Colleges and universities use the ACT and SAT tests to measure incoming student abilities; the results of these tests are nearly as important as high school grades when students apply for entrance into US colleges and universities.

III. Definition of School Groupings

A. Pre-School or Nursery School

In the U.S., 3, 4 and some 5 year olds have the opportunity to attend a pre-school under a private system. These schools can be located in a local school, a church, or an independent free standing building. Pre-school is not publicly funded and is fee-based. Typically children are grouped by age. Most of the schools are play-based, although different philosophies of formal education can be found. Typically, 3 year olds attend 2 half days a week and 4 year olds may attend 3 half days a week. Some preschools also serve as day care centers for families in which both parents work. Typically reading is not taught in pre-school, although a few programs can be found which include reading fundamentals. Concentration of learning is on small and gross motor skills, and basic academic readiness skills. Some pre-schools offer a full-day kindergarten option for those parents who work. The public school kindergarten programs are typically only half day programs with no before or after school care. If a kindergarten program is offered it follows the state curriculum guidelines, and teaches pre-reading and math skills.

B. Elementary School

Elementary school provides education for children ages 5 to 11, kindergarten and grades 1,2,3,4 &5. While kindergarten at age 5 is not required, most families send their children to kindergarten. Elementary school is the beginning of publicly funded school. In the U.S. children are grouped by age and advanced in school by age. There are usually opportunities within the grade for different levels of learning, with opportunities for advanced learners and remedial learners. The public elementary school is usually neighborhood based and the source of playmates for your child. In the U.S., pre-reading skills are introduced in kindergarten (age 5) along with early math skills. Formal reading begins in the 1st grade (age 6). Studies have shown

that while children learn to read at different ages, the difference between early and late readers is not a predictor of reading skills by about the age of 8 or 9 years old. In addition to reading and math, elementary school also has a broad base of writing, science, social studies, art, music, computer, personal development and physical education. Only in a few schools will a 2nd language be introduced at the elementary level. English as a Second Language (ESL) is offered starting at the elementary level in the public school. Parents are allowed to visit the schools, and there are many opportunities for parents to volunteer their skills, particularly at the elementary school. Parents may approach teachers and administrators with suggestions and concerns with their child. Usually the personnel are willing to consider changes if they feel it would be in the best interests of the child. With a child coming to a new country and sometimes starting a new language, feel free to talk to the school if you think something could be done to ease your child's adjustment. The school day is from approximately 8:30a.m. to 3:00p.m. with recess (playtime break) and a lunch break at the school.

C. Middle School

Middle school provides education for children ages 11 to 14, grades 6, 7 & 8. The children attend school in a different location and in the public school system several elementary schools will combine into the same middle school. A middle school is usually 2-4 times the size of the elementary school. Middle school is considered the transition between elementary school and high school and from childhood to young adulthood. Because of this philosophy, U.S. students at this age level are all introduced to the same academic curriculum. The school day is structured differently with the children changing class rooms and teacher with each subject. There are 6-8 different class periods daily. Within the grades children may be separated by academic ability in classes, particularly math and English. Often an introduction to foreign languages is offered. For those who choose, the student may have the option to complete one year of high school foreign language during middle school. If your home country requires more advanced language development at this age, you may want to consider outside supplemental language instruction. Middle school is a time when extracurricular activities such as theatre, music, sports and clubs become important activities in adolescent life.

D. High School

High school provides education for children ages 14 to 18, grades 9, 10, 11 & 12. It is the final level of education before the university, community college or trade school. The terms Freshman (9th), Sophomore (10th), Junior (11th) and Senior (12th) are also used to identify grade level. At the high school level the student has more specific choices of course work. Each district has a set of minimum graduation requirements, which will include courses in English, math, science, social studies, physical education and a combination of foreign language, fine arts and practical arts. Within this framework the student has various choices from more remedial levels, average levels, and more advanced levels. If a student is prepared for the material, by the 11th or 12th grade a student may have the opportunity to take a college level course for advanced credit in the U.S. university system. In high school competitive sports are offered along with theatre, orchestra, instrumental and vocal music and clubs. Your child will have an

opportunity to meet more U.S. children by participating in a school extracurricular activity. Each school district has 1 or more high schools each with 800-2500 students. A student's high school performance may determine the type of university or higher education program they pursue upon graduation. During high school national tests are given to determine the student's potential to advance to various higher education levels.

If your child anticipates returning to your home country to continue higher education within your university system, you might want to consider the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. This program is recognized internationally for entrance to universities. In contrast to the typical high school college preparatory curriculum, the IB semester consists of fewer subjects, studied in greater depth and with a bilingual proficiency. Developed in Switzerland, the curriculum was intended as a secondary education program which could be utilized and accepted worldwide. Not all U.S. schools will offer an IB curriculum.

E. Post-Secondary Education

While most families on international assignment do not bring their older children (19 years+) for education in the U.S. we include a brief description of the US university system. Some form of post-secondary education is available to those U.S. students who seek it. Each state offers a public university system which the tuition is partly subsidized by the state for state residents. Residency of at least 1 year is necessary. Some are medium to large institutions (with undergraduate and graduate level programs). Some can be quite competitive for admission while others may not be competitive at all. Student's admission to the university is in part determined by their high school academic performance and course selection and as well as the results of a national standardized test (SAT or ACT). Post-Secondary is the educational level that students in the U.S. study subjects in great depth and select their majors and career choices. Graduate level programs on the master level, professional level and PhD level are pursued after completing the 4 years of undergraduate studies.

IV. Life in Schools

A. Atmosphere

It is valuable to visit your child's school to understand the academic and non-academic atmosphere that prevails. Administrators or counselors are happy to serve as tour guides and should always be contacted in advance. Do not be alarmed if your visit takes place during the lunch hour if the children seem a bit rambunctious. Students in American public schools generally enjoy a great deal of personal freedom in the cafeteria, on the playground and in the halls before and after class. They are supervised by teachers or members of the school staff, but they generally are more relaxed in the lunch room and in the halls. If you are visiting on a rainy day, you may observe "indoor recess" in the gymnasium which could be noisy. Rest assured that when they are in the classroom, students do settle down and work quietly and diligently. Some classrooms are more informally arranged than others. For instance, some teachers prefer to have the children's desks in a circle rather than in rows. Teachers will sometimes assign

group projects, where several students work together and are thus not seated at their desks during a part of the classroom period. Teachers are expected, however, to have good control of their classrooms. Private school policy regarding these issues of personal freedom varies. Some private schools function as the public schools do, while others may have a more closely supervised approach. Again, it is always a good idea to visit the school so that you are comfortable with that particular school's management style.

B. Parental Involvement

In addition to participating in parent/teacher conferences, most American schools encourage parents to become involved in the volunteer activities of the school. Most schools have a "PTA" (Parent Teacher Association) or "PTO" (Parent Teacher Organization). These organizations usually work with the school administration, dealing with issues such as student safety, communication to parents, academic concerns, etc., as well as fundraising and planning special programs to enhance the school experience for the student population.

Getting involved with the PTA or PTO is a great way to become well informed about your child's school. It also provides you with an opportunity to meet and really get to know other parents. There will probably be a choice of committees on which you could work; you do not have to commit to a leadership role. Some volunteer opportunities may involve actually working in the school, volunteering in the school library on day a week or one day a month for example. Be sure to alert the school administration that you would like to get involved, and ask for the name and phone number of the head of the parent volunteer organization at the school. Parent volunteers are usually welcomed and encouraged at all levels at all schools, both public and private.

C. Extracurricular Activities

A well-rounded education requires that students learn their academic subjects as well as develop socialization skills and learn nonacademic skills. Belonging to a group can be a rewarding connection with peers and a good way to develop self-confidence. These are the reasons that schools, public and private, provide numerous extracurricular activities from which their students can choose to participate. At each level of education the opportunities and choices increase. For example at the elementary school level, all students are introduced to art, music, drama and a variety of athletic experiences. At the middle school level, students have required courses in some of the above areas but are provided opportunity to participate in after school activities of their choice. For example, competitive football, soccer, swimming, track, lacrosse, basketball etc. In addition many clubs allow students to pursue other interests, for example, computers, drama, fine arts, forensics, jazz band, photography, yearbook and student council. Almost universally, each activity or club is sponsored by adults, using specialized instruction, who demonstrate a working knowledge of the activity and a desire to teach children. An even greater variety of extracurricular experiences are available at the high school level, many of which help students identify strengths, talents and interests which may direct them to future colleges, vocations or avocations.

D. Facilities

All schools maintain facilities other than classrooms which enhance or support their educational mission.

Libraries and Media Centers

Libraries are universally available and are accessible to students throughout the day and often after hours. Libraries often contain a “media center” which maintains and makes available other types of educational materials including computers and software, audio and video tapes, slides, sound sequences, projectors and recorders of various types for use individually or in groups. The wide availability of computers and access to the internet has provided almost unlimited opportunities for students and teachers to obtain information that can enhance and facilitate learning.

Fitness Facilities/Gymnasium

Fitness facilities, or ‘gyms’ as they are typically referred to, are supplied by almost all schools in the United States. Gyms often consist of a large indoor court with various sports equipment. They are open during lunch hours and for specific hours before and after school for athletes or students who wish to exercise. Many gyms will be accompanied by a weight room and a locker room with a shower. Students are sometimes expected to use these communal showers following Physical Education classes or general use of the gym’s facilities.

SCHOOLS IN YOUR AREA

Parents will need to carefully evaluate their priorities, and then choose an institution that can best satisfy their preferences. It's worthwhile considering how much you can afford to pay for your child's schooling, the proximity of the school from home and the workplace, the curriculum you'd like your child to learn, and what kind of teaching style or environment is best for your child.

Miami Public Schools

Grades K-12 are under the umbrella of the [Florida Board of Education](#). Schools in Florida are graded according to how well students have mastered the Sunshine State Standards. These standards are the skills Florida teachers determined the students must learn at each grade level and are measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) each school year. Schools earn points based on student achievement and are assigned a grade at the completion of each school year. The ratings are given by the Governor's A+ Plan for Education.

- **Magnet and Charter Schools** Miami-Dade County Public Schools offer a large array of [choice options](#). Approximately 40% of Pre-K through 12 students have made an active choice in the school or program in which they are enrolled.
- **International Studies Program** Miami-Dade County Public Schools [IS Program](#) is a highly demanding curriculum that allows the IS Students who complete the program through the 12th grade to receive a "Bachiller" degree from the Ministry of Education and Sciences of Spain and a High School Diploma from the State of Florida.

Miami Private Schools

- [The Archdiocese of Miami Catholic Schools](#) is a school system of 34,149 children in 61 elementary and secondary schools in Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties.
- [Miami Country Day School](#)
- [List of Miami Montessori Schools](#)

Additional Resources for Miami Area Schools

- [US News Rankings](#) of Miami-Dade County Public High-schools.
- [GreatSchools.org](#) for ratings for Public and Private Schools.
- Miami has an extensive system of Public and Private [International Baccalaureate Schools](#).
- You can find information on [Florida's ratings of schools](#) here.

MIAMI AREA UNIVERSITIES

- [Barry University](#)
- [Carlos Albizu University](#)
- [Florida International University \(FIU\)](#)
- [Florida Memorial University](#)
- [Johnson and Wales University](#)
- [Keiser University](#)
- [Manchester Business School](#)
- [Miami Culinary Institute](#)
- [Miami Dade College](#)
- [Miami International University of Art & Design](#)
- [Nova Southeastern University](#)
- [St. Thomas University](#)
- [Talmudic University](#)
- [University of Miami](#)



[University of Miami](#)

Banks and other financial institutions, such as credit unions, offer a variety of services. These services include:

- checking and saving accounts
- credit and debit cards
- online bill pay
- loans
- insurance
- financial planning

Banks in the United States are insured by the Federal Government for deposits up to \$250,000 per depositor per bank. The bank or credit union will display the letters FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) as proof.

Checking and Savings Accounts

To open a checking or savings account you will need the following information:

- Two forms of picture identification including but not limited to your passport, driver's license or work ID.
- Social security number. If you have not yet received your social security number, the bank can open an account with a W8 Temporary Tax ID form (available at the bank). You will need to call the bank with your social security number once it arrives in the mail.
- Local mailing address. You may use your office address as your mailing address, but be prepared to call your bank branch as soon as you have your permanent address.
- Letter of Employment
- Cash for the initial deposit can range from \$25-\$150 dollars.

Checks

More businesses and banks are offering online or automatic bill paying options. However, you may still need to pay some bills by mail. **NEVER SEND CASH!** You will want to order at least the minimum quantity of checks. This will cost a set fee that the bank will charge you. The checks will be pre-printed with your name, address, telephone number and account number and will be mailed to your home.

ATM or Debit Card

The most popular way of obtaining cash is by using an ATM (Automated Teller Machine) card, also referred to as a debit card. ATM's are located in most banks, malls, airports, grocery stores and in many other public places. You will be given a PIN (Personal Identification Number) for using your card. It is important that you memorize this number and not keep written record of it with your card in order to protect your account. Most ATM's will take all cards, but many banks will charge a service fee for using another bank's ATM. Through the ATM you may deposit, transfer and withdraw funds. There will usually be a limit to the amount of money you can withdraw in any 24-hour period.

Credit Cards

For many international transferees, the lack of a U.S. credit history can be a challenge. In most cases, you will not be approved for a U.S. credit card initially. One suggestion to assist in building your U.S. credit history is to open a **secured credit card**. With approval from the bank, you can put a certain amount of money in a savings account that will remain in the account. The secured credit card would have a credit limit equal to the amount deposited in the savings account. You will need to use your secured credit card and make the minimum monthly payments, or you may also pay the full amount due. After 9 months or so, if the bank sees that you have a good payment record, they may approve you for a regular credit card.

Security

Always pay attention to the other people around you at an ATM. Do not use the machine if you are suspicious of someone's behavior. It is safer to find another ATM or to come back later. Do not enter your PIN number into the ATM with anyone close enough to see it.

Credit card theft is another increasing problem. In order to protect your card from being abused, never give your credit card or credit card number to a service provider you have not called. Another precaution is to destroy or shred copies of receipts and bills. Criminals will not hesitate to dig through the trash to find a copy of your credit card number.

Major U.S. Banks

Below is a list of links to some of the larger U.S. banks. Not every bank is represented in all U.S. locations; in some cases you may find that the local bank is a better option for you than some of the larger banks. Your IOR DS Consultant can help you in selecting a bank by sharing the various options available locally, as well as the products they offer to support expatriates.

- [Bank of America](#)
- [CHASE](#)
- [Citibank](#)
- [CHASE](#)
- [HSBC](#)
- [TD Bank](#)
- [List of Miami Banks](#)

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION/DRIVING

Miami's public transit system is the most diverse and extensive of any locality in Florida. If you aren't in a hurry, it's not difficult to get around the city without a car.

By Metrorail

The [Metrorail](#) is a 25-mile dual track, elevated rapid transit system serving Miami and surrounding cities. The 23 accessible Metrorail stations are about one mile apart, providing easy access for bus riders, pedestrians, and passengers who are dropped off and picked up. It connects many areas of tourist interest, including downtown Miami, Dadeland Mall, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Lowe Art Museum, Miami Museum of Science, Village at Merrick Park and many other nearby shopping areas. Coconut Grove and downtown Coral Gables can be reached via short shuttle bus from various stations. [Schedules](#) are available online, and [Train Tracker](#) allows you to see the estimated time of arrival of the next train approaching your station.

Metrorail operates between roughly 5AM and midnight, with a bus serving all Metrorail stations operating in the overnight hours, effectively providing 24-hour service. To ride Metrorail, you must use an [EASY Card](#) or EASY Ticket as the fare gates do not accept cash. EASY Card may be purchased [online](#).

[Transit Fares](#) for Metrobus and Metrorail may be discounted when a monthly pass is purchased.



Miami Metrorail Map Courtesy of [MiamiDade.Gov](#)

By Bus

Miami's [bus system](#) covers the entire Miami-Dade County and connects to bus lines serving Broward County and the Greater Fort Lauderdale area. Recent developments have made the bus system more reliable than in the past. Even with the changes, and because of high local traffic, buses tend to have a hard time remaining on schedule. System wide real-time Metrobus [tracking](#) will become a reality by April 2016. Many of the major bus routes operate 24 hours a day, seven days week.

To easily pay your bus fare, use an [EASY Card](#) or EASY Ticket. Just tap your card or ticket on the farebox and board the bus. You can also pay with cash (no pennies), but change will not be provided. The EASY Card or EASY Ticket offers free Bus-to-Bus Transfers. Cash-paying customers must pay the full fare each time they board a bus, as paper transfers have been eliminated.

[Park and Ride](#) is available at many Metrobus surface lots. Parking rates range from free to \$4.50/day, with [discounts](#) available for monthly parking permits.

By Metromover

Downtown Miami is served by a free elevated people mover system known as [Metromover](#), which connects to Metrorail at two stations at Government Center in the central business district and at Brickell Station in Brickell. Metromover is free of charge and is the most efficient way to move around Downtown Miami. It is a great way to take a rest when walking around downtown, and a great time to take pictures of the skyscrapers and growing Miami skyline from above.

By Taxi

All taxis are fitted with maps of the barrier islands which state the cost per location. The same applies for passengers leaving the islands onto the mainland, though normal rates apply for person traveling by taxi within the islands or within the mainland.



Service is available throughout Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Monroe counties regardless of pick-up location. The normal service charges apply for these four counties, but it is wise to ask for a pre-determined price beforehand if leaving the county as this will in most cases turn out to be cheaper and most drivers are willing to negotiate when leaving the county. If you wish to be taxied to a location outside of those four counties, you must negotiate a price and advise the cab company first. Drivers may refuse to drive outside of the metropolitan area if they are not advised to do so beforehand.

All taxi drivers must have a valid license to operate. It is uncommon to hear of crimes involving unlicensed taxis anywhere in the metropolitan area since Dade County keeps track of all taxi activity in

and around Miami and cooperates with other counties in getting this information. If you enter a cab and do not see a valid license placed in front of the passenger's seat, you should not enter the taxi and instead call another cab company regardless of what the driver says. If you willingly enter a taxi without a license or with an expired license and there is an incident or accident, it is possible that you may not be able to hold the driver accountable by law. When entering a cab you should make note of the driver's name, license number and cab number if any problems arise during the trip. This information should be easily found inside the taxi. It may be able to help you identify the cab driver to the police or the cab company.

By Car

You will find that a car is very convenient in Miami, and car rentals are cheap in comparison to other major US cities. You can find cheap car rentals off terminal from the Miami Airport from such companies as E-Z Rent-A-Car and Ace Rent A Car. The major car rental companies found in airport terminals can often be more expensive for the same service and vehicles.

Surface roads in Miami are usually easy to navigate. The area's roads are designed around a grid system, where most roads are numbered based on their distance from the city center. All avenues run north to south, while all streets run east to west. For example, the address, "9500 NW 30th Street" would be at the intersection of NW 30th Street and NW 95th Avenue. Most roads in Miami conform to this nomenclature, but due to the more than 30 municipalities within Miami-Dade County, there are a few exceptions to be aware of. Examples include Coral Gables, the Coconut Grove section of Miami (city proper), Miami Lakes, and Hialeah.

New visitors to Miami should be aware that the area's drivers are particularly aggressive. This shouldn't discourage anyone from using the roadways, but a passive approach to Miami driving can save you from an unwanted exchange with another driver, or even worse an accident. Posted speed limits are ignored by most drivers, especially on larger roads with lower speed limits.

Map Websites

<http://www.maps.google.com>

<http://www.mapquest.com>

Transportation "App" Options

Several web based phone applications to secure a driver are available throughout the Miami area. The driver knows your approximate location based on your phone GPS. Payment is automatic through the app and fares may be cheaper than a taxi.

- [Uber](#)
- [Lyft](#)

AAA Travel Protection

AAA is a membership organization that offers benefits such as roadside service and towing, discounts on car products and services, reference materials and travel discounts.

Call 1-800-352-5382 for additional information and cost. <http://www.aaa.com>

LOCAL REGISTRATION

Social Security Procedures

[United States Social Security Administration](#)

1-800-772-1213

Upon arrival in the United States, employees holding work visas will be required to apply, in person, for a Social Security number. The Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5) can be used by anyone who has never been issued a card, needs a replacement card or has changed his or her name. Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will assist you with this process and can answer any questions you might have.

THIS SERVICE IS FREE.

To get an original number and card, you'll need to complete an Application for a Social Security Card ([Form SS-5](#)), and show the following documents IN PERSON at the local social security office.

- Passport
- [I-94](#)
- Work Visa
- Any other documents received by US Immigration

If all of your information is confirmed, your Social Security card will arrive in the mail in approximately 2-4 weeks. Several days after you have successfully completed the application process, you may be able to take your identification with your receipt back to the Social Security office to inquire about your Social Security number before you receive your card. Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will assist you with this process and can answer any questions you might have.

L-2 Visa Employment Opportunity Law Changes

The L-2 visa allows the dependent spouse and minor, unmarried children of qualified L-1 visa holders to enter into the U.S.

Changes took place on July 27, 2006 that apply to spouses of L-1 Visa holders in the US on an L2 Visa. Prior to that date, spouses on L-2 Visas were not permitted to obtain a social security card and were denied the right to be employed in the U.S. The law change now permits L-2 Visa holders (spouses only, not dependent children) to work on a full-time basis in the U.S. with proper employment authorization from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The L-2 Visa holder must apply for a social security card in addition to applying for an Employment Authorization Document before they can begin employment.

Social Security Numbers

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has issued guidelines, which permit E-1, E-2, and L-2 spouses to obtain Social Security Numbers without having to first obtain employment.

Authorization Documents (EADs) from the CIS. They must show proof that their spouse is in E-1, E-2 or L-1 status, and present an original marriage certificate in the native language. However, before they are authorized to work, they must obtain an EAD. [The new SSA guidelines are online here.](#)

Employment Authorization Document (EAD): L-2 Visa holders can apply for this document utilizing USCIS Form 1-765, Application for Employment Authorization. They must provide the following forms of identification: valid passport, 1-94 Arrival-Departure Document, Marriage Certificate from home country, two identical and color photographs taken within 30 days of application. Currently, the process from application to EAD issue takes 3 to 4 months. The L2 Visa holder may also engage in full-time study in the U.S. A dependent child still may not apply for an EAD card except in cases of severe hardship. Local offices are open Monday thru Friday 9am to 4pm.

****Notice**** Social Security offices are closed on all U.S. Federal holidays.

Obtaining a Driver's License/State ID Card

In the U.S., a driver's license is issued by each individual state and not by the federal government in Washington DC. Since there is no national identity card in the USA and many Americans don't have a passport, a driver's license issued by your state is the only official piece of identification for many citizens. Since 9/11, you will need to show a valid driver's license to enter many big office buildings. The Division of Driver Licenses, Bureau of Field Operations, has [driver license offices](#) located throughout the state. Appointments are provided at all full service offices. The [Driver License Office Directory](#) has addresses, telephone numbers, days and operating hours. Appointments are recommended. A new resident exchanging a valid out-of-state license for a Florida license will be required to pass the vision and hearing tests only. Requirements listed [here](#).

Driver license handbooks, motorcycle handbooks and commercial driver license handbooks are available for your use from your local driver license offices. There is no charge for the handbooks and may be returned for re-use. These handbooks can be viewed [online](#).

For information on how to obtain a driver's license, see the website of [Florida's DMV](#).

New Resident

- Other pertinent [information](#) regarding vehicle registration, tags, and titles.

Your Destination Services Consultant will assist you with the proper procedures.

TV, Cable, Telephone, and Internet

The main service providers for TV cable, landline telephone and internet all offer combination packages. They are in stiff competition with each other, so special offers change monthly, sometimes even weekly.

- [AT&T](#)
- [Comcast](#)
- [DirectTV](#)
- [Dish](#)

Mobile Phones

There are four major wireless carriers in the US.

- [AT&T Wireless](#)
- [Verizon Wireless](#)
- [Sprint](#)
- [T-Mobile](#)

Ten digit dialing is in effect in the Miami area. All calls from or within the area, even local calls, require dialing the area code. There are some public pay phones scattered around the city, but they are becoming increasingly rare with the predominance of cell phones. It is not safe to assume you will be able to find a pay phone at any given time.

Computers, Electronics, Cameras

- [Best Buy](#) is a national chain: Apart from sales, their [Geek Squad](#) repairs PC computers.
- [Apple Stores](#)

Housewares and Furniture

- [Bed Bath & Beyond](#) is a national chain whereas the name explains, you can buy necessities for the bedroom and bathroom. From bath towels to comforters.
- [Ikea](#): Swedish-owned furniture shop for all home and home office furniture, soft furnishings, home accessories, flooring, crockery and children's toys.
- [Home Depot](#) is a national chain where anything for renovation or home appliances can be bought. There's paint, tape, hammers and doors.
- [Crate and Barrel](#) is a national chain that sells more modern style furniture compared to Ikea. It is slightly more expensive but has more design.
- [Furniture Envy](#) is a national chain that sells furniture.
- [Pottery Barn](#) is a national chain that sells kitchen supplies, furniture and household items.
- [Williams-Sonoma](#) is a national chain that sells kitchen supplies.
- [Rooms to Go](#) is a national chain that sells furniture.
- [The Container Store](#) is a national chain that sells storage boxes, organizers and the sort.
- [Pier 1 Imports](#) is a national chain that specializes in imported furniture.

- [Target](#) is a national chain that sells anything from groceries, microwaves to furniture.
- [Kmart](#) is a national chain that sells anything from groceries, microwaves to furniture.
- [Walmart](#) is a national chain that sells anything from groceries, microwaves to furniture.

Food Shopping

Miami's biggest grocery chain is [Publix](#), and you'll find them in almost all the neighborhoods. Other grocery stores are [Milam's Market](#), [Whole Foods](#) (mostly organic), [The Fresh Market](#), and [Target](#). For buying in bulk whole sale stores like Costco, Sam's Club, and BJ's can come in handy. For those who want a more personal touch, go to the farmers market! Check where and when your [local farmers market](#) is. [Grocery Taxi](#) will also deliver food to you (for a fee). You can find a longer selection of grocery stores in the area [online](#).

Pharmacies

There are several major pharmacy chains in Miami, found on nearly every block on commercial streets. Several pharmacies are open 24 hours. Also the main grocery stores like Publix, Target, and Wal-Mart have full service pharmacies.

- [Walgreens](#)
- [CVS](#)
- [List of Pharmacies in Miami](#)

Excursions

- [Star Island](#)

Biscayne Bay

Star Island is an artificial island within Miami Beach. The houses are colossal and the architecture is worth taking a look at. Most of the houses are gated. The houses on Star Island are homes to or have been homes to celebrities such as Will Smith, Shaquille O'Neal, Lenny Kravitz, Gloria Estefan, Rosie O'Donnell, Madonna, P. Diddy and many more. If you are planning a trip to Miami this is a good bit of free sightseeing for you.



[Star Island](#)

- [Frost Art Museum](#)

10975 SW 17th Street

Located at Florida International University, the Frost Art Museum has a large variety of 1960's and 1970's American photography, pre-Columbian artifacts dating back from 200 to 500 AD, ancient African and Asian bronzes, and a growing number of Caribbean and Latin American paintings and artwork.

- [Lowe Art Museum](#)

1301 Stanford Dr.

With many antique art, ceramics, pottery and sculptures ranging from Greco-Roman times, Renaissance, Baroque, Art of Asia, Art of Latin America, and ancient potteries, the Lowe Art Museum offers a great range of art through the centuries.

- [Venetian Pool](#)

2701 DeSoto Blvd (in Coral Gables)

In the 1920s Denman Dink transformed this limestone quarry into a pool with a waterfall, an area for kids and an area for adults. The water in this pool comes from a spring and is drained daily. In addition to the swimming facilities, there is a snack bar (you cannot bring outside food into the Venetian Pool) and lockers.



[Venetian Pool](#)

- [Vizcaya Museum and Gardens](#)
3251 South Miami Ave
European-inspired estate built by James Deering in the 1910s and today is a National Historic Landmark. Includes a main house filled with art and furnishings and ten acres of gardens on Biscayne Bay.



[Vizcaya](#)

- [Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden](#)
10901 Old Cutler Road, Coral Gables, Florida
Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden is home to the only outdoor rainforest in North America, several famous outdoor art installations (including world famous Chihuly glasswork), the January Chocolate Festival, and world-famous Mango Festival.

- [Fruit and Spice Park](#)
24801 S.W. 187th Avenue, Homestead, Florida
The Preston B. Bird & Mary Heinlein Fruit & Spice Park is the only tropical botanical garden of its kind in the United States. The unique 37-acre public facility is owned and operated by the Miami-Dade County Park and Recreation Open Spaces. The Park's tropical climate can be found nowhere else in the continental U.S., and hosts over 500 varieties of fruits, vegetables, spices, herbs, and nuts, and other commercially important plant specimens from around the world.

- [Robert is Here Fruit Stand and Farm](#)
19200 SW 344th St, Homestead, FL 33034
This fruit stand and farm is popular with both tourists and local residents. It offers many of the most sought after varieties of locally-grown tropical fruits and vegetables as well as widely-acclaimed smoothies, ice creams, and other prepared foods. It also features a petting zoo and is located only minutes from one of the main entrances to Everglades National Park as well as an alligator farm.



- [Haulover Beach](#)
10800 Collins Avenue, Miami, FL
Unlike other Florida beaches, Haulover Beach experiences some noticeable waves. The park is popular among local residents for its nudist area, fishing, and crabbing, although it also offers golf, tennis, and nearby restaurants. Dog-friendly areas both on the beach and off provide opportunities for recreation for dogs and their companions. And lastly, kite-flying fun has been a staple at the park for over 20 years, with a biannual kite festival and kite store which operates year round.

- [Oleta River State Recreation Park](#)

3400 N.E. 163rd St

The largest urban park in Florida has trails for biking, a beach for swimming, picnic areas and a playground for kids. Get a canoe or kayak to row to a mangrove island within the park. Several animals such as eagles and fiddler crabs also make their home here.



Photo courtesy of [Oleta River State Recreation Park](#)

- [Zoo Miami](#)

12400 SW 152nd St Miami

Zoo Miami is the largest and oldest zoological garden in Florida. It houses over 1,200 wild animals and is a free range zoo with global conservation initiatives. Its climate allows it to keep a wide variety of animals from Asia, Australia and Africa like no other zoo in the country.

- [Jungle Island](#)

1111 Jungle Island Trail, Miami

Jungle Island is a lush, tropical garden that features animal shows and exhibits. This is a great outing for the family to enjoy.

- [Miami Seaquarium](#)

4400 Rickenbacker Causeway

This 38 acre tropical island paradise features marine shows and marine life exhibits. Expect to stay around two to three hours touring the large aquarium.



[Miami Seaquarium](#)

- [Barnacle Historic State Park](#)

Coconut Grove

Built in the late 1800s, the former home of Ralph Middleton is one of the oldest homes in the county and is situated on the shore of Biscayne Bay in Coconut Grove. The forest surrounding the home is hardwood hammock and is the last of its kind in the area.

Events

- [Ultra-Music Festival](#) is an annual outdoor electronic music festival that occurs in March.
- [Coconut Grove Art Festival](#) The three-day festival showcases the works of over 350 of the finest artists and craftsmen in the world. A signature event of the South Florida cultural calendar, the Arts Festival is a true “Celebration of the Arts”, offering live entertainment and the tropical waterfront views of Coconut Grove.
- [Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival](#) This very special festival celebrates Bahamian-American contributions to Miami with Bahamian Food, Arts and Culture.
- [Carnaval Miami](#) is a ten day festival during the weeks of late February and early March. A major part of Carnaval is Calle Ocho, the largest Hispanic street festival in Miami.
- [Miami Fashion Week](#) consists of exhibitions, fashion shows and sponsor lounges as the world’s fashion elite flock to Miami.
- [Miami International Boat Show](#) held each February is the largest marine show in North America.
- [FedEx Orange Bowl Football Game](#) is a major Bowl Championship Series (BCS) game held in Miami’s Sun Life Stadium. Top teams battle for this prize.



Expat Resource Guide

- www.expatexchange.com

Google Translator

- [Translate](#) 90 languages to and from language of choice using iTunes.

Volunteer Opportunities

- www.volunteermatch.org

Parent & Children Resources

- [Mom's Clubs](#) - social groups offering events and outings with mothers and their young children.

Smart Phone Apps for Travel:

- [Uber](#) : Similar to a taxi service but all web based. Payment also handled online, do not pay or tip driver directly. Uber driver knows your approximate location based on your phone GPS.
- [Lyft](#) : Wherever you're headed, count on Lyft for rides in minutes. The Lyft app matches you with local drivers at the tap of a button. Just request and go.
- [Google Maps](#) : Map by direction
- [Apple Maps](#) : Map by direction
- [Map Quest](#) : Map by direction
- [Waze](#) : Community based traffic & navigation with alternate route suggestions
- [CityMaps2Go](#) : The #1 travel app lets you discover exciting new places. Beautiful photos and insider tips at the touch of a button. You will receive stories about places you like and can instantly save and find them on your maps and in your lists.

Smart Phone Apps for Communication:

- [WhatsApp](#) : Free local & international Real Time messaging
- [Line](#) : Exchange free instant messages with friends whenever and wherever with one-on-one and group chats. LINE is available on all smartphone devices (iPhone, Android, Windows Phone, Blackberry, Nokia) and even on your PC.
- [Viber](#) : Free text, calling, photo messages and location-sharing with Viber users. No registration, alias or invitations required. Instantly integrates with your own contact list. Best-quality mobile calls using 3G or Wi-Fi.
- [Skype](#) : Stay in touch with your family and friends for free on Skype. Download Skype today to chat and call on desktop and mobile.

Smart Phone Apps for Local Information/Reviews:

- [Angie's List](#) : Referrals for doctor, dentist, child care, maid, mechanic, painter, plumber, etc.
- [Yelp!](#) : Find local businesses, restaurants, bars, clubs, events, etc. with map, lists, and reviews
- [Next Door](#) : Neighbors share community events, items for sale, recommendations for babysitters, doctors and handymen, crime reports, ideas about how to improve their neighborhood and more.
- [Meet Ups](#) : Meetups are neighbors getting together to learn something, do something or share something. Cultural groups advertise gatherings here as well.

Smart Phone Apps for Weather:

- [WTHR13](#) : Local weather and closings; includes radar and forecast
- [Weather Channel](#) : National and international time, temperature & weather
- [Tornado](#) : Set up tornado alerts & siren

U.S. IDIOMS

Idioms are words, phrases, or expressions that are not taken literally- they have meaning beyond a literal translation of the words. Idioms are generally used in casual, familiar conversation but can also come up in certain business settings. Here are some examples of commonly used American English idioms:

better off - in a more fortunate position

Big deal! - So what? That doesn't really matter.

(to) blow things out of proportion - to exaggerate; to make more of something than one should

(to) call it a night - to stop an activity for the rest of the night

dime a dozen - so plentiful as to be nothing special; common

(to) do the trick - to achieve the desired results

(to) give someone the cold shoulder - to ignore someone on purpose; to snub someone

(to) get the ball rolling - to get started

(to) go back to the drawing board - to start a task over because the last try failed; to start again from the beginning

happy camper [slang] - a happy person; a satisfied participant

(to) have a heart of gold - to be very kind and giving

(to be) head over heels in love - very much in love

(to) hit the nail on the head - to be right

(to) learn the ropes - to learn the basics

(to) lose one's touch - to no longer be able to do something well

made of money - very rich

needless to say - obviously

piece of cake - very easy

(to) pitch in - to help

(to) pull an all-nighter - to stay up all night to do work

rule of thumb - a useful principle

(as) sharp as a tack - very intelligent

(to) sit tight - to wait patiently

(to) stab someone in the back - to betray someone

(to) tell someone off - to scold; to tell someone in strong words what one really thinks

When pigs fly! [slang] - never

(to) twist someone's arm - to persuade someone; to convince someone

(to be) up in the air - not yet determined; uncertain

Many common American idioms come from sports, here are some examples:

strike out- to fail or to do poorly at something (*baseball*)

(to) call the shots- to make the decisions; to be in charge (*basketball*)

ballpark- a guess or an estimate (*baseball*)

down and out- lacking money or prospects; penniless or destitute (*boxing*)

down to the wire- to the very end or last minute (*horse racing*)

drop the ball- to make an error, to miss an opportunity (*football, baseball, rugby*)

hands down- with great ease; unconditionally; often (and originally) in the phrase “to win hands down” (*horse racing*)

(to) have someone in your corner- to have the support or help of someone (*boxing*)

(to) hit it out of the park; home run- to be wildly successful, to do a great job (*baseball*)



To learn even more idioms, visit the following links:

- [Everyday American English Idioms](#) - with example sentences.
- [Useful Idioms for Lower-Intermediate to Advanced Students \(Teacher's Resource\)](#)
- [Idiom Site A-Z](#)
- [Sports Idioms](#)
- [English Language Learning: American English Idioms](#)

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Holidays can be confusing as there are national (federal) holidays, bank holidays, state holidays. Verify those in your area with Human Resources at your place of business, especially before planning vacations or weekend get-aways!

[Federal Holidays listed through 2020](#)

[Florida Holiday List](#)

The following are legal holidays in Florida and need to be treated as such by employers:

- New Year's Day January 1*
- Martin Luther King Day Third Monday in January
- Memorial Day Last Monday in May
- Independence Day July 4*
- Labor Day First Monday in September
- Columbus Day Second Monday in October
- Veterans' Day November 11*
- Thanksgiving Day Fourth Thursday in November
- Christmas Day December 25*

*If a holiday falls on a Sunday, the day following is observed as the legal holiday.