

The Betsy Hotel, South Beach

WHILE THE TIDES CONTINUES TO BE OUR FAVORITE PROPERTY IN SOUTH BEACH, on our latest trip we decided to investigate **The Betsy Hotel** on Ocean Drive at >>



THE BETSY continued

14th Street. The 63-room property re-opened in April 2009 after a \$40 million renovation, and has a plantation style unique for the neighborhood, with its shuttered windows and four-column portico. L. Murray Dixon, who was responsible for many of the area's flashier art deco properties, decided to indulge in the colonial chic of the time when he designed the original Betsy Ross Hotel in 1940. The property also benefits from a relatively quiet location (three blocks can make a big difference on Ocean Drive).

After taking a look at a very small standard room with a partial view of the beach, we opted for a Master Suite at the rear of the property overlooking the

pool. It was a good choice — bright, immaculate and very quiet (the pool is not very popular). The extra living room worked well for some laptop work and a room service lunch, and the king-

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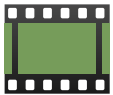
size bed was firm enough to avoid feeling like a giant marshmallow.

The bath, a snug white marble sarcophagus, got mixed reviews. The “rain forest” showerhead tended to rain water all over the floor, and an embedded television screen in the mirror seemed like a needless talking point. But the fresh orchids

were a nice touch, and there was plenty of mercifully soft lighting.

The Betsy's restaurant, *BLT Steak* (part of Laurent Tourondel's growing empire), was excellent. One evening, we enjoyed some people-watching out on the deck with a perfectly seared rib eye finished with herb butter, a rich side of creamed spinach and a spicy glass of Malbec. For lunch the next day, the signature spicy tuna sandwich with Old Bay french fries and a bright glass of Pinot Grigio was close to perfection.





Click photo above to view scenes of THE BETSY HOTEL

The Betsy certainly has its drawbacks. The pool is small and forlorn, and the elevator is the size of a dumbwaiter. There is also no formal spa to speak of; a “wellness garden” on the rooftop consists of a few massage tables and some obligatory Buddha statues (though to be fair, you need

to head north on Collins to find a real spa). But while the standard rooms and facilities don’t compare to those of The Tides, many South Beach devotees may find this a refreshing alternative, if only for dinner at the restaurant. The service was prompt and cordial throughout, the

rooftop worked well for some lazy sunning, and we saw plenty of smiles amid the hardwood furnishings and potted palms of the airy, inviting lobby. **87**

Master Suite Pool View, \$504; Royal Suite Ocean View, \$904. 1440 Ocean Drive, Miami Beach 33139. Tel. (866) 792-3879. www.thebetsyhotel.com