

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO GAY TRAVEL
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What's New in...

MIAMI

by **Jimmy Im**

At 70 years old, Michael Aller — the Mister Miami Beach for several decades now — has the spirit of someone 40 years younger, and a passion to tell Miami stories without hesitation. He's such a cool guy, he knows everyone, and he still manages Miami Beach Tourism's hotline 24/7, answered by Michael himself on his cell phone. His biggest claim to fame? "In 1991, I was the first openly gay member of the City of Miami Beach administration. Now, I'm just Michael Aller."

As an indication of an always growing gay scene in Miami, we're in good hands. The city has come a long way, and is constantly changing for the community. In fact, Miami recently opened the **Miami LGBT Visitor Center** (www.gogaymiami.com) dedicated to welcoming the community to the city. Miami is also finally coming around with gay pride. They launched **Miami Beach Pride** two years ago (last year's Pride saw attendance more than double), and they have high expectations for their annual gay pride in April 2011.

In 2010, locals and visitors alike finally welcomed the new speedy **Skytrain** at Miami International Airport (in addition to two brand-new terminals into which \$6 billion was pumped). Additionally, you can now get shuttle service direct from the airport (Terminal E) to South Beach for \$2.35 on the newly-launched, half-hour shuttle, thanks to the Miami government. It's great for those on a budget.

Another hotel that's back on the South Beach scene, at a smaller scale, is the **Betsy** (1440 Ocean Drive, Tel: 305-531-6100. www.thebetsyhotel.com). This beautifully restored hotel right on Ocean Drive (just a few blocks from the designated "gay" beach) has just 61 rooms with contemporary colonial design and Malin+Goetz toiletries (the gay-owned cosmetic boutique brand). While there's a pool on the ground floor, the deck is a quiet sanctuary with day beds and fruity cocktails.

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