

THE VANCOUVER SUN

Living it up in Miami

Sarah Treleaven lives it up, then cools it down in Florida

BY SARAH TRELEAVEN, NATIONAL POST COMMENTS (4)

STORY

PHOTOS (1)



If you happen to be staying at the South Beach Ritz-Carlton, be sure to take advantage of their tanning butler to help you spread lotion on those hard-to-reach places.

Photograph by: Handout photo, South Beach Ritz-Carlton

On my trip to Miami, I had the rare pleasure of speaking with the world's only "Tanning Butler" (property of The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach) -and the slightly more dubious honour of conducting my first-ever professional interview while wearing a bikini. (Turns out it's a little awkward.)

Twenty-year-old Miguel Pando, he of the adorable smile and bronzed biceps, easily visible in his de rigueur tank top and shorts, has missed a calculus review to meet with me. (When he's not butlering at the Ritz, he's studying accounting.) I feel bad, but not bad enough to turn down his offer of lotioning and spritzing.

Pando trolls the Ritz's elegant pool area and beachfront from noon until 4 p.m. every weekend, offering to apply tanning lotion (the high-end, pleasantly scented Hampton Sun line) to "hard-to-reach places" and spritzing guests with Evian. For birthdays and bachelorette parties, he'll sometimes throw in extra perks like a cake or well-chilled bottle of Champagne.

Pando was scouted on the street in spring of last year, after the former Tanning Butler was scooped up by an Armani campaign. (That's Miami for you.) "They wanted someone who has a personality, who wasn't a wallflower and could engage guests," Pando says, grinning widely.

And then it was time to strip down. In order to write this story fairly, and to provide an accurate assessment of the smooth, capable hands of the world's only Tanning Butler, I took off my clothes, stretched out over the white terry-cloth cabana bed and submitted to my journalistic duties.

Notebook still in hand, sunglasses shading my eyes and melting under the hot Miami sun, I ask Pando if anyone has ever asked for anything inappropriate, something unbecoming the office of Tanning Butler. He pauses, reflecting. "Sometimes people ask if I can apply lotion to their easy-to-reach places," he says, smiling shyly. "But I try to keep things professional."

SOUTH BEACH

Oh, South Beach. Against all odds, I love you. I love that a string bikini doubles as both beach and bistro wear. I love your art deco buildings and old-school cruiser bicycles. I love your cosmetically altered ladies and Ed Hardy-clad men. I love your food, from fresh fish to Cuban stewed beef, and your commitment to extensive, girly cocktail menus. But most of all, I love that you're just so darn indulgent. It's almost impossible to be in South Beach -even for work -without feeling like you're on vacation.

GLUTTONY Despite the strict bikini dress code, this city can easily turn anyone into a glutton. At The Betsy Hotel's BLT Steak, the Miami outpost of the New York City institution, I gorged on too many ounces of perfectly marbled and grilled steak (with the help of my friend, Jim, whose dedication to beef eating did not go unappreciated), huge doughy onion rings, roasted Brussels sprouts with bacon, and cheese popovers. And the South Beach Food Tour offered a strolling, dinner-size sampling of a number of key culinary destinations, including La Marea at The Tides and Jerry's Famous Deli.

PRIDE If there's one place that makes you rethink your personal appearance, it's Miami. So when I arrived, week-old home manicure making my hands look like they had been submerged in a terrarium full of hungry weasels, it was time to step up my game. At the spa at the Ritz-Carlton South Beach, I tried the Carita Velvet Hands & Feet treatment, two hours of soaking and buffing bliss. I'm certain that my nails, painted a lovely shade of neon red, turned some heads later that night. (Even if my non-fake boobs put me at a comparative disadvantage.)

GREED You know what I don't need? An unbelievably soft suedelined, black leather purse with chunky zippers designed by boy wonder Alexander Wang. But shopping at The Webster has nothing to do with anything as gauche as "need" or "utility." (Though it might have some correlation with "insufficient funds.") The Webster is the kind of carefully curated, extremely pricey oversized boutique where you want absolutely everything -from a Lanvin gold lamé dress to YSL suede pumps.

ENVY I am extremely jealous of Miamians. Not so much for their limited body fat or bronzed skin or easy access to ceviche, but for their taxi drivers. I took six cab rides in Miami and each was more delightful than the last. One driver told me a heartwarming story about his father taking him to pick out the family Christmas tree every year, another moaned amusingly about hosting dinner for her sizable dysfunctional family, another offered me tips on the best Cuban food in the city, and yet another diagnosed (fairly accurately) my romantic difficulties immediately after I stepped into the cab.

© Copyright (c) National Post



[E-mail this Article](#)



[Print this Article](#)



[Share this Article](#)

