

SOUTH FLORIDA OVERVIEW

South Florida has the feel that it exists for a different, less serious purpose than do other regions of the United States. South Florida has always been a refuge for adventurers, entrepreneurs, outcasts, conquistadors, escaped slaves, pirates, migrant labourers, refugees from Vietnam, boatpeople from Haiti, retirees, the rich, eccentrics from everywhere, and tourists. However, South Florida has contributed its fair share to Florida's distinction as *"The Sunshine State"*, friend of the ill and feeble, but particularly friendly to the tourist. Canadian tourists have developed a taste for South Florida in the winter, and combined with the annual *"snowbird"* migration to the area, leads to a distinctive Canadian flavour and presence in the South Florida tourist population.

Miami today is a burgeoning giant of international commerce and finance, as well as a place to find pleasure and relaxation. Based on its unique geographical proximity to Latin America, many United States and multinational companies now locate their Latin American headquarters and distribution centers in Greater Miami because no other city can match its airline connections to the Western Hemisphere. The same ease of access, coupled with a congenial climate, attracts hordes of Latin tourists--especially in Miami's steamy summer months (South America's winter), when visitors from the northern climates are less in evidence. In addition, Miami's cosmopolitan character and entrepreneurial spirit attract numerous other immigrants from all over the world.

Today, more than 47 percent of Greater Miami's population is Hispanic--the majority from Cuba, with significant populations arriving from Colombia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Panama. Thirty years ago, the tidal wave of Cubans fleeing the Castro regime flooded an elderly neighbourhood just west of downtown Miami with refugees. This area became known as Little Havana. Today, with a half-million Cubans widely dispersed throughout Greater Miami, Little Havana remains a magnet for Cubans and Anglos alike who come to experience the flavour of traditional Cuban culture. In addition, approximately 160,000 Haitians also live in Greater Miami (some 65,000 reside in Little Haiti, a 200-block area on Miami's northeast side), as do Brazilians, Germans, Greeks, Iranians, Israelis, Italians, Jamaicans, Lebanese, Malaysians, Russians Jews, Swedes, and many more international immigrants.

More than 5.2 million visitors flock to Greater Fort Lauderdale each year, 1.3 million people--half of whom comprise the area's labour force--are permanent residents, and another 25,000 new residents arrive in the area each year. Over the past decade, Greater Fort Lauderdale has regrouped, revamped, and grown. Its more sophisticated atmosphere, propelled by an undercurrent of arts and culture, has brought international tourists, new residents from around the world, and a strong diverse business base. Today, Fort Lauderdale is the fifth-largest urban centre in Florida, and Broward is the state's second-largest county. Tourism, retail, distribution and high technology now dominate Fort Lauderdale's business climate, partially due to the area's lack of a state or city income tax. Fort Lauderdale has a cross-section of industries represented by everything from South Florida-based franchise and distribution businesses, to thriving companies owned by African and Latin Americans. Foreign trade is gaining in prominence, with the help of Port Everglades' 82-acre Foreign Trade Zone {FTZ}, and its one-million-cubic-foot freezer warehouse which holds a wide range of food products including fish and seafood. In addition, Port Everglades represents the first and/or last leg for 30 cruise ships with 3.1 million passengers setting sail year-round, making Port Everglades the second-busiest cruise port in the world. To accommodate the influx of annual tourists, the Fort Lauderdale area has approximately 2,500 restaurants, and 560 hotels, motels, and resorts with nearly 35,000 rooms.

In conclusion, it is very important to consider the role Port Everglades {Fort Lauderdale} and the Port of Palm Beach play in the scheme of things in South Florida. Since the Port of Miami has no more room to grow, Port Everglades is capitalizing on the situation to lure existing Miami distribution business, as well as generate new distribution patterns. Port Everglades has significant opportunities for expansion with available land in the general area, whereas Miami has no room for expansion and the Port is operating at full capacity. The Port of Palm Beach is relatively small and is dominated by one company, Tropical Shipping. Tropical Shipping receives between 4-7 full trailer loads of Canadian food products weekly, according to the Deputy Port Director. A majority of these products are destined for Caribbean and Central American countries, and the Port of Palm Beach provides a complimentary service to what is offered by the Port of Miami.