FONTAINEBLEAU MIAMI BEACH

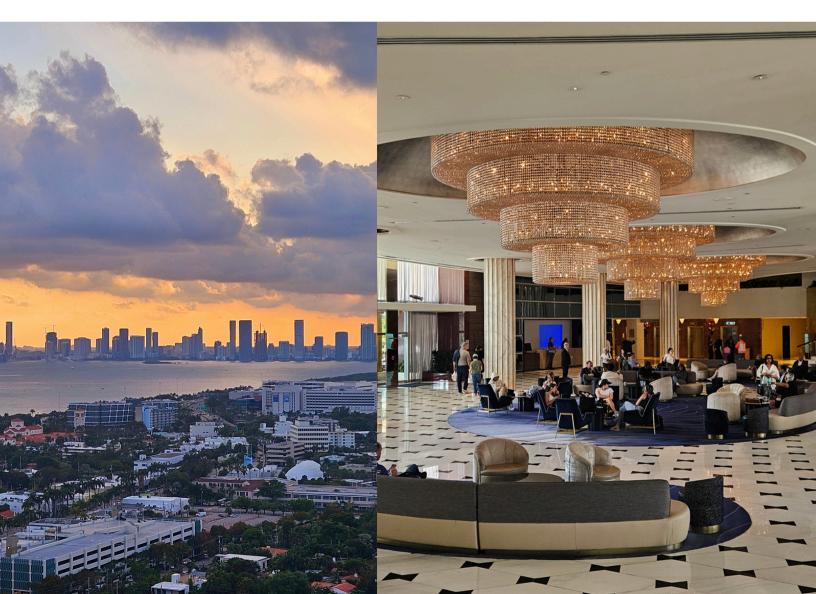## LUXURY + HISTORY
BY RAY COLLINS

When I had an opportunity to host an informercial on South Beach during Spring Break, I admit I had mixed emotions. But my concerns about being put in the middle of a mosh pit of college kids were eased when the producers told me we were recording it at the iconic Fountainebleau Hotel.

This was the place made famous by Frank Sinatra and his Rat Pack, as well as major motion pictures like "Goldfinger." The high-end steakhouse here is called "Prime 54" in honor of the year the resort opened.A bar is subtlety called "LIV," the roman numeral for 54. There are bow ties on the lobby floor tiles in honor of the designer who favored bow ties.

It's no longer just one building—but rather three main buildings: The original 11-story hotel, a 36-story condominium/hotel and an 18-story tower. They also added a five-story convention story next to the original building.

Truth be told, we were put on the 33rd floor of that middle building and getting up and down from our room was a nightmare. One night we waited in line for 15-20 minutes.
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The Fountainebleau reminded me of a Las Vegas casino. No, there aren't any slot machines or blackjack tables, but the size of the campus, the number of restaurants and the size of the pool feels like Vegas.

Service is hit and miss:

*We had good luck at a breakfast restaurant due to an energetic waiter named Darrell. I even spoke to the manager about him, and the manager was just as polished and professional.

*But the night before, we sat at the bar of a steakhouse waiting ten minutes to order drinks. I saw others waiting as well. Some of the workers are excellent, while others are sloppy. I guess with a place this large, you're bound to get some lemons.

We were glad to have access to bikes we could rent and ride down the boardwalk. The hotel is situated 10-15 minutes north of the epicenter of South Beach. It was fun to people-watch as we rode along the path.

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South Beach is not the friendliest place. It's part of a major city and there's a certain smugness of the people. It's a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live here. As for the Fountainebleau, I'm glad to experience it—but I prefer something more manageable. Any place that charges you $75 per day to park your car isn't my kind of place.

Ray Collins has written more than 500 articles about hotels and destinations around the world. www.RayCollinsMedia.com/articles.